



John Woolley and Gerhard Peters

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PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

1960 and 1976 - 2012

Republican Candidates Debate in Las Vegas, Nevada

October 18, 2011

Tweet

PARTICIPANTS:

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

MODERATOR:

Anderson Cooper (CNN)

COOPER: I want to ask the candidates to please take your podiums. While the candidates are taking their podiums, I just want to tell you a little bit more about how tonight's debate is going to work. I'll be the moderator. I'll ask questions on a wide range of issues. And I'll work to make sure that each candidate is getting his or her fair share of questions.

Also, Western voters right here in the hall will be asking questions, as well, and viewers watching at home can participate, also. We're accepting questions for the candidates on Twitter. If you send a question for the candidates on Twitter, make sure to include the hash tag #cnndebate, on Facebook at facebook.com/cnnpolitics, and on cnpolitics.com.

Now, each candidate will have about one minute to answer the questions and 30 seconds for follow-ups and rebuttals. I'll make sure candidates get time to respond if they're singled out for criticism. There are no buzzers. There's no bells. I'll just politely inform the candidates when they need to wrap things up.

We want everyone watching to emerge from this debate more informed about the candidates, more able to judge who should be the next president of the United States.

Now that everyone is in place, it's time for the candidates to introduce themselves to our audience. All the candidates are going to keep it short. Here's an example. I'm Anderson Cooper. I'm usually anchoring "AC 360" on CNN, but I'm honored to be here in Las Vegas at the Western Republican Presidential Debate. That will be my introduction. [applause]

So, Senator Santorum, you're first. Let's start with you.

SANTORUM: Thank you, Anderson. I'm Rick Santorum. My wife, Karen, and I are the parents of seven children. And my little girl, Isabella, 3 years old, had some surgery today. She's doing fine. But I just wanted to send to her a little "I love you" and I will take the red eye home to be with you tomorrow and make sure that you're feeling fine. [applause]

PAUL: I'm Congressman Ron Paul from Texas. I'm the champion of liberty. I am the only one that has offered a balanced budget in -- in a sincere method. And also, I present the case for a free society as being the best defense for peace and prosperity. [applause]

CAIN: I am businessman Herman Cain. I've been married to my wife, Gloria, for 43 years. And I'm a 42-year businessman, which means I solve problems for a living. [applause]

ROMNEY: I'm Mitt Romney. I was a businessman for 25 years. Then I had the fun of getting the chance to help run the Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City next door. And then I had the fun also of being governor of Massachusetts. I also solve problems, sometimes for a living, sometimes for other people to make things better. And I hope to be your president. Thank you. [applause]

PERRY: Good evening. I'm Texas Governor Rick Perry, a proven job-creator and a man who is about economic growth, an authentic conservative, not a conservative of convenience. [applause]

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GINGRICH: I'm Newt Gingrich. And unlike President Obama, I'm glad to be in Las Vegas. I think it's a great place to have a convention. [*applause*]

And -- and when I am president, we're going to replace class warfare with cooperation so all Americans can get off food stamps and onto paychecks. [*applause*]

BACHMANN: Hi, my name is Michele Bachmann. I am thrilled to be able to be with you tonight in Las Vegas. And this is one night when I hope what happens in Vegas doesn't stay in Vegas. [*applause*]

COOPER: All right. Let's -- time to begin. We'll begin with actually a question in the hall.

QUESTION: This is for all candidates. What's your position on replacing the federal income tax with a federal sales tax?

COOPER: I'll direct that to Congresswoman Bachmann. You've been very critical of Herman Cain's 9-9-9 plan, which calls for a 9 percent sales tax, a 9 percent income tax, and 9 percent corporate tax. In fact, you've said it would destroy the economy. Why?

BACHMANN: Well, I am a former federal tax litigation attorney. And also, my husband and I are job-creators.

One thing I know about Congress, being a member of Congress for five years, is that any time you give the Congress a brand-new tax, it doesn't go away. When we got the income tax in 1913, the top rate was 7 percent. By 1980, the top rate was 70 percent. If we give Congress a 9 percent sales tax, how long will it take a liberal president and a liberal Congress to run that up to maybe 90 percent? Who knows?

What I do know is that we also have to be concerned about the hidden tax of the value-added tax, because at every step and stage of production, you'd be taxing that item 9 percent on the profit. That's the worry.

In my plan -- again, that's a tax plan, it's not a jobs plan -- my plan for economic recovery is real jobs right now. I have a tax plan. I have a jobs plan. I have an energy plan and a plan to really turn this country around and create millions of high-paying jobs.

COOPER: Mr. Cain, a lot of prominent conservatives now are coming forward saying that your 9-9-9 plan would actually raise taxes on middle-class voters, on lower-income voters.

CAIN: The thing that I would encourage people to do before they engage in this knee-jerk reaction is read our analysis. It is available at hermancain.com. It was performed by Fiscal Associates. And all of the claims that are made against it, it is a jobs plan, it is revenue-neutral, it does not raise taxes on those that are making the least. All of those are simply not true.

The reason that my plan -- the reason that our plan is being attacked so much is because lobbyists, accountants, politicians, they don't want to throw out the current tax code and put in something that's simple and fair. They want to continue to be able to manipulate the American people with a 10-million-word mess.

Let's throw out the 10-million-word mess and put in our plan, which will liberate the American workers and liberate American businesses. [*applause*]

COOPER: Senator Santorum, will his plan raise taxes?

SANTORUM: Herman's well-meaning, and I love his boldness, and it's great. But the fact of the matter is, I mean, reports are now out that 84 percent of Americans would pay more taxes under his plan. That's the analysis. And it makes sense, because when -- when you don't provide a standard deduction, when you don't provide anything for low-income individuals, and you have a sales tax and an income tax and, as Michele said, a value-added tax, which is really what his corporate tax is, we're talking about major increases in taxes on people.

He also doesn't have anything that takes care of the families. I mean, you have -- you have a situation where, under Herman's plan, a single person pays as much in taxes as a -- as a man and a woman raising three children. Ever since we've had the income tax in America, we've always taken advantage of the fact that we want to encourage people to -- to have children and not have to pay more already to raise children, but also pay that additional taxes -- we gave some breaks for families. He doesn't do that in this bill.

And we're going to -- we've seen that happen in Europe. And what happened? Boom, birth rates went into -- into the basement. It's a bad tax for -- again, it's bold. I give him credit for -- for starting a debate, but it's not good for families, and it's not good for low-income... [*crossstalk*]

COOPER: I'm going to give you 30 seconds to respond. That 84 percent figure comes from the Tax Policy Center.

CAIN: That simply is not true. I invite people to look at our analysis, which we make available.

Secondly, the -- the point that he makes about is a value-added tax -- I'm sorry, Representative Bachmann -- it's not a value-added tax. It's a single tax.

And I invite every American to do their own math, because most of these are knee-jerk reactions. And we do provide a provision, if you read the analysis, something we call opportunity zones that will, in fact, address the issue of those making the

least.

COOPER: I want to bring in Congresswoman Bachmann since she was referenced by you.

BACHMANN: But Anderson, how do you not have a value-added tax? Because at every level of production you have a profit, and that profit gets taxed, because you produce one portion at one level, and then you take it to the next supplier or vendor at the next level, and you have an exchange. That is a taxable event.

And ultimately, that becomes a value-added tax. It's a hidden tax. And any time the federal government needs revenue, they dial up the rate and the American people think that it's -- that it is the vendor that creates the tax, but it's the government that creates the tax. *[applause]*

COOPER: Governor Perry, in your state, you have a 6.25 percent sales tax. Would taxpayers pay more under the 9-9-9 plan?

PERRY: No.

Herman, I love you, brother, but let me tell you something, you don't need to have a big analysis to figure this thing out. Go to New Hampshire, where they don't have a sales tax, and you're fixing to give them one.

They're not interested in 9-9-9. What they're interested in is flatter and fairer. At the end of the week, I'm going to be laying out a plan that clearly -- I'll bump plans with you, brother, and we'll see who has the best idea about how you get this country working again.

And one of the ways, right here in Nevada you've got 8-plus percent. You want nine cents on top of that, and nine cents on a new home -- or 9 percent on a new home, 9 percent on your Social Security, 9 percent more?

I don't think so, Herman. It's not going to fly.

COOPER: Mr. Cain, 30 seconds. *[applause]*

CAIN: This is an example of mixing apples and oranges. The state tax is an apple. We are replacing the current tax code with oranges. So it's not correct to mix apples and oranges.

Secondly, it is not a value-added tax. If you take most of the products -- take a loaf of bread. It does have five taxes in it right now. What the 9 percent does is that we take out those five invisible taxes and replace it with one visible 9 percent.

So you're absolutely wrong. It's not a value-added tax.

Now one other quick thing.

COOPER: Your time's up, I'm sorry.

CAIN: This whole thing about --

COOPER: You'll have another 30 seconds. Trust me, they're going to go --

CAIN: Tonight?

COOPER: Yes, I guarantee it. In about a minute.

Congressman Paul, you called his plan dangerous today.

PAUL: Oh, it is, because it raises revenues, and the worst part about it, it's regressive. A lot of people aren't paying any taxes, and I like that. I don't think that we should even things up by raising taxes.

So it is a regressive tax. So it's very, very dangerous. And it will raise more revenues.

But the gentlemen asked the question -- he didn't even ask what we're talking about. He asked the question, what are you going to replace the income tax with? And I say nothing. That's what we should replace it with. *[applause]*

PAUL: But I do want to make a point that spending is a tax. As soon as the governments spend money, eventually it's a tax. Sometimes we put a direct tax on the people. Sometimes we borrow the money. And sometimes we print the money.

And then when prices go up, like today, the wholesale price index went up 7 percent rate, and if you look at the free market, prices are going up 9 and 10 percent. So that is the tax.

So, spending is the tax. That is the reason I offered the program, to cut \$1 trillion out of the first year budget that I offer. *[applause]*

COOPER: Mr. Cain, in 30 seconds?

CAIN: Once again, unfortunately, none of my distinguished colleagues who have attacked me up here tonight understand the

plan. They're wrong about it being a value-added tax.

We simply remove the hidden taxes that are in goods and services with our plan and replace it with a single rate 9 percent. I invite every family to do your own calculations with that arithmetic.

COOPER: Governor Romney, you have your only 59-point plan. In the last debate, Mr. Cain suggested it was too complicated. Is simpler better?

ROMNEY: Oftentimes simpler is better. And I know we're not supposed to ask each other questions, but if you permit.

Herman, are you saying that the state sales tax will also go away?

CAIN: No, that's an apple.

ROMNEY: OK.

CAIN: We're replacing a bunch of oranges.

ROMNEY: OK.

So, then Governor Perry was right that --

CAIN: No, he wasn't. He was mixing apples and oranges.

ROMNEY: Well, but will the people in Nevada not have to pay Nevada sales tax and in addition pay the 9 percent tax?

CAIN: Governor Romney, you're doing the same thing that they're doing. You're mixing apples and oranges. You're going to pay --

ROMNEY: I'm --

CAIN: No, no, no, no. You're going to pay the state sales tax, no matter what.

ROMNEY: Right.

CAIN: Whether you throw out the existing code and you put in our plan, you're still going to pay that. That's apples and oranges.

ROMNEY: Fine. And I'm going to be getting a bushel basket that has apples and oranges in it because I've got to pay both taxes, and the people in Nevada don't want to pay both taxes. [*cheering and applause*]

ROMNEY: Now let me make this comment. Let's just step back here. We've got a lot of people in America that are out of work. We've got a lot of people in this state, 13.4 percent of the people in this state out of work. We've got home prices going down. We've got to talk about how to get America growing again, how to start adding jobs, raising incomes, and tax is part of it.

I want to reduce taxes on our employers to make it easier to invest in America. I want to reduce taxes on middle income families. I like your chutzpah on this, Herman, but I have to tell you, the analysis I did, person by person, return by return, is that middle income people see higher taxes under your plan.

If it's lower for the middle class, that's great. But that's not what I saw. I have to tell you, I want to get our burden down on our employers, on our people. I want to make sure our regulations work to encourage the private sector as opposed to putting a damper on it.

I want to get trade, opening up new markets for America. I want to also find a way to get our energy resources -- and they're all over the world, are all over this country, used for us. This is time to get America growing again. And that's what this campaign ought to be about.

COOPER: Thank you, Governor.

Mr. Speaker... [*cheering and applause*]

COOPER: Speaker Gingrich, you have said in recent days that Mr. Cain's 999 plan would be a harder sell than he lets on. How so?

GINGRICH: Well, you just watched it. [*laughter*]

GINGRICH: I mean, look, there are -- first of all, I think that Herman Cain deserves a lot of credit. He has had the courage to go out and take a specific very big idea at the right level. [*applause*]

GINGRICH: And he has us at least talking about something that matters as opposed to the junk that all too often is masquerading as politics in this country. So I think that's important.

There are two parts to this. The first is, if you take his plan, and I think it's in the interest of the whole country to have serious people take his plan and go through it step by step. There are much more complexities than Herman lets on. OK. I mean, 999, when you get into details like you pay it on a new product, you don't pay it on an old product, et cetera, there's a lot more detail here than he lets on.

Second, I favor very narrow, focused tax cuts such as zero capital gains, 100 percent expensing, because I think, as Governor Romney said, jobs are the number one challenge of the next two or three years. Get something you can do very fast. Change on this scale takes years to think through if you're going to do it right.

COOPER: Congresswoman Bachmann, you said in the last debate that everyone should pay something. Does that mean that you would raise taxes on the 47 percent of Americans who currently don't pay taxes?

BACHMANN: I believe absolutely every American benefits by this magnificent country. Absolutely every American should pay something, even if it's a dollar. *[cheering and applause]*

BACHMANN: Everyone needs to pay something in this country. That's why with my tax plan, I take a page out of not theory but what's provable and what works. What is provable and what works was the economic miracle that was wrought by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. That's the plan that I look at.

I also want to completely abolish the tax code. I want to flatten the tax for all of Americans, simplify that tax for all of Americans. And that creates job growth, which is exactly what we need to have.

Because to be able to fuel the fire for this economy, again, it is the tax code, but it doesn't end with the tax code. It's the regulatory burden that costs us \$1.8 trillion every year, but it's more than that cost. It's jobs that are lost.

So we need to repeal "Obama-care," repeal the jobs and housing destruction act known as Dodd-Frank. President Obama's plan has been a plan for destruction of this economy and failure.

COOPER: Thank you.

BACHMANN: I plan to change that with real jobs right now at michelebachmann.com. *[applause]*

COOPER: We've been talking about Herman Cain's plan. Let's talk about Governor Romney's plan.

Governor Perry, you have said that Governor Romney was an abject failure at creating jobs when he was governor of Massachusetts. If you've read his 59-point plan, has it changed your mind?

PERRY: Well, here's the nine that we need to get focused on. And it's not 999, it's not 59. It's that 9 percent unemployment in this country. And that's where we've got to get focused in America, is how to create an environment where the men and women get back to work.

It's the reason I laid out a plan, Newt, this last week to get this energy that's under our feet. We've got 300 years of resources right under our feet in this country. Yet we've got an administration that is blockading our ability to bring that to the surface, whether it's our petroleum, our natural gas, or our coal. And 1.2 million jobs could be put to work.

Americans who are sitting out there listening to this conversation tonight, somebody wants someone on this stage to say: Listen, we got an idea here how to get you to work and take care of your family and have the dignity of a job. And that's exactly what I did with my plan, laid it out where Americans understand we don't have to wait on OPEC anymore. We don't have to let them hold us hostage. America's got the energy. Let's have American energy independence. *[applause]*

COOPER: Governor Romney, does Governor Perry have the answer?

ROMNEY: Well, he's absolutely right about -- about getting energy independence and taking advantage of our natural resources here. We're an energy-rich nation that's acting like an energy-poor nation. And that's something I've been talking about for some time, as the governor has. He's absolutely right.

But there are also a lot of good jobs we need in manufacturing, and high-tech jobs, and good service jobs, technology of all kinds. America produces an economy that's very, very broad. And that's why our policy to get America the most attractive place in the world for investment and -- and job growth encompasses more than just energy. It includes that, but also tax policy, regulatory policy, trade policy, education, training and balancing the federal budget, and that starts with repealing Obamacare, which is a huge burden on this economy. *[applause]*

COOPER: Senator Santorum, does Mitt Romney have the answers for jobs? **SANTORUM:** I agree with -- with all of what Governor Romney and both -- and Governor Perry said. I would add the fact that -- that I've put forward the plan that's going to allow for income mobility. That's a new term, but I've been using it for a long time, which is people at the bottom part of the income scale being able to rise in society.

Believe it or not, studies have been done that show that in Western Europe, people at the lower parts of the income scale actually have a better mobility going up the ladder now than in America. And I believe that's because we've lost our manufacturing base. No more stamp "Made in America" is really hurting people in the middle.

And that's why I focus all of the real big changes in the tax code at manufacturing. I cut the corporate rate for manufacturing to zero, repeal all regulations affecting manufacturers that cost over \$100 million and replace them with something that's

friendlier, they can work with. We repatriate \$1.2 trillion that manufacturers made overseas and allow them to bring it back here, if they invest in plants and equipment. They can do it without having to pay any -- any excise tax.

The final point I would make to Governor Romney, you just don't have credibility, Mitt, when it comes to repealing Obamacare. You are -- you are -- your plan was the basis for Obamacare. Your consultants helped Obama craft Obamacare. And to say that you're going to repeal it, you just -- you have no track record on that that -- that we can trust you that you're going to do that.

COOPER: Governor Romney, 30 seconds. [*applause*]

SANTORUM: You don't.

ROMNEY: You know, this I think is either our eighth or ninth debate. And each chance I've -- I've had to talk about Obamacare, I've made it very clear, and also in my book. And at the time, by the way, I crafted the plan, in the last campaign, I was asked, is this something that you would have the whole nation do? And I said, no, this is something that was crafted for Massachusetts. It would be wrong to adopt this as a nation.

SANTORUM: That's not what you said.

ROMNEY: You're -- you're shaking -- you're shaking your head.

SANTORUM: Governor, no, that's not what you said.

ROMNEY: That happens -- to happens to be...

[*crossstalk*]

SANTORUM: It was in your book that it should be for everybody.

ROMNEY: Guys... **PERRY:** You took it out of your book.

SANTORUM: You took it out of your book.

ROMNEY: Hey, his turn. His turn, OK, and mine.

[*crossstalk*]

ROMNEY: I'll tell you what? Why don't you let me speak?

[*crossstalk*]

SANTORUM: You're allowed -- you're allowed to change -- you're allowed to change...

ROMNEY: Rick, you had your chance. Let me speak.

SANTORUM: You can't change the facts.

ROMNEY: Rick, you had your chance. Let me speak.

SANTORUM: You're out of time. You're out of time.

COOPER: He ate into your time. [*booing*]

Rick...

[*crossstalk*]

ROMNEY: I haven't had a chance to respond yet, because you were interrupting the entire time I was trying to speak.

[*crossstalk*]

ROMNEY: Let me make it very clear.

COOPER: I'll give another 20 seconds.

ROMNEY: And -- look -- look, we'll let everybody take a look at the fact checks. I was interviewed by Dan Balz. I was in interviews in this debate stage with you four years ago. I was asked about the Massachusetts plan, was it something I'd impose on the nation? And the answer is absolutely not.

It was something crafted for a state. And I've said time and again, Obamacare is bad news. It's unconstitutional. It costs way too much money, a trillion dollars. And if I'm president of the United States, I will repeal it for the American people.
[*applause*]

COOPER: All right. Senator Santorum?

SANTORUM: Mitt, the governor of Massachusetts just is coming forward saying we have to pick up the job left undone by Romneycare, which is doing something about cutting health care costs.

What you did is exactly what Barack Obama did: focused on the wrong problem. Herman always says you've got to find the right problem. Well, the right problem is health care costs. What you did with a top-down, government-run program was focus on the problem of health care access. You expanded the pool of insurance without controlling costs. You've blown a hole in the budget up there. And you authored in Obamacare, which is going to blow a hole in the budget of this country.

COOPER: Governor Romney, I'm going to give you 30 seconds.

ROMNEY: I'm -- I'm sorry, Rick, that you find so much to dislike in my plan, but I'll tell you, the people in Massachusetts like it by about a 3-1 margin.

And we dealt with a challenge that we had, a lot of people that were expecting government to pay their way. And we said, you know what? If people have the capacity to care for themselves and pay their own way, they should.

Now, I can tell you this, it's absolutely right that there's a lot that needs to be done. And I didn't get the job done in Massachusetts in getting the health care costs down in this country. It's something I think we have got to do at the national level. I intend to do that.

But one thing is for sure. What Obama has done is imposed on the nation a plan that will not work, that must be repealed. And when it comes to knowledge about health care and how to get our health care system working, I may not be a doctor like this one right over here, but I sure understand how to bring the cost of health care down and how to also make sure that we have a system that works for the American people.

SANTORUM: It didn't do it. It didn't do it.

COOPER: Speaker Gingrich, you've also been very critical of Mitt Romney's plan not only on Obamacare, but his plan to lower the capital gains tax only on those earning under \$200,000.

GINGRICH: I want to say on health for a minute -- OK, let's just focus. "The Boston Herald" today reported that the state of Massachusetts is fining a local small business \$3,000 because their \$750-a-month insurance plan is inadequate, according to the bureaucrats in Boston.

Now, there's a fundamental difference between trying to solve the problems of this country from the top down and trying to create environments in which doctors and patients and families solve the problem from the bottom up.

And candidly, Mitt, your plan ultimately, philosophically, it's not Obamacare, and that's not a fair charge. But your plan essentially is one more big government, bureaucratic, high-cost system, which candidly could not have been done by any other state because no other state had a Medicare program as lavish as yours, and no other state got as much money from the federal government under the Bush administration for this experiment. So there's a lot of big government behind Romneycare. Not as much as Obamacare, but a heck of a lot more than your campaign is admitting. *[applause]*

COOPER: Governor Romney, 30 seconds.

ROMNEY: Actually, Newt, we got the idea of an individual mandate from you.

GINGRICH: That's not true. You got it from the Heritage Foundation.

ROMNEY: Yes, we got it from you, and you got it from the Heritage Foundation and from you.

GINGRICH: Wait a second. What you just said is not true. You did not get that from me. You got it from the Heritage Foundation.

ROMNEY: And you never supported them?

GINGRICH: I agree with them, but I'm just saying, what you said to this audience just now plain wasn't true. *[crosstalk]*

ROMNEY: OK. Let me ask, have you supported in the past an individual mandate?

GINGRICH: I absolutely did with the Heritage Foundation against Hillarycare.

ROMNEY: You did support an individual mandate?

ROMNEY: Oh, OK. That's what I'm saying. We got the idea from you and the Heritage Foundation.

GINGRICH: OK. A little broader.

ROMNEY: OK.

BACHMANN: Anderson?

COOPER: He still has time. Let him finish.

ROMNEY: I get a little time here.

Number two, we don't have a government insurance plan. What we do is rely on private insurers, and people -- 93 percent of our people who are already insured, nothing changed. For the people who didn't have insurance, they get private insurance, not government insurance.

And the best way to make markets work is for people to be able to buy their own products from private enterprises. What we did was right for our state, according to the people in our state. And the great thing about a state solution to a state issue is, if people don't like it, they could change it.

Now, there are a lot of things.

BACHMANN: Anderson?

COOPER: Congresswoman Bachmann.

BACHMANN: Anderson, I think it has to be stated that Obamacare is so flat-out unpopular, that even the Obama administration chose to reject part of Obamacare last Friday, when they tried to throw out the CLASS Act, which is the long-term care function.

Secretary Sebelius, who is the head of Health and Human Services, reported that the government can't even afford that part and has to throw it out. And now the administration is arguing with itself.

When even the Obama administration wants to repeal this bill, I think we're going to win this thing. We're going to repeal it! And I will! *[applause]*

COOPER: We've got to take a quick break. We will continue this discussion on the other side.

We have a long way to go. We'll be right back.

[commercial break]

COOPER: And welcome back to the continuing debate. We got a Twitter question. We ended talking about medicine, Obamacare. We actually have a Twitter question about it. It was a question left at CNN debate.

If Obama's health plan is bad for the U.S., what is the alternative, and how will you implement it?

Congressman Paul, is there any aspect of Obamacare that you would like to keep, whether it's keeping kids to stay on their parents' insurance until they're 26 or no pre-existing conditions?

PAUL: Really not, because he's just adding on more government. There's been a lot of discussion about medicine, but it seems to be talking about which kind of government management is best. Our problem is we have too much. We've had it for 30, 40 years. We have Medicare. We have prescription drug programs. We have Medicaid.

And what we need -- I mean, there's a pretty good support up here for getting rid of Obamacare, because it's a Democratic proposal, and we want to opt out. I think we'd all agree on this.

But if you want better competition and better health care, you should allow the American people to opt out of government medicine. And... *[applause]*

And the way to do this is to not de-emphasize the medical savings account, but let people opt out, pay their bills, get back to the doctor-patient relationship. There is inflation worked into it. When a government gets involved in an industry, prices always go up. We have tort laws to deal with. And we need more competition in medicine.

But the most important thing is letting the people have control of their money and getting it out of the hands of the third party. As soon as you go to the government, the lobbyists line up, the drug companies line up, these insurance companies line up. And even with Obamacare, the industries, the corporations get behind it and affect the outcome, and already insurance premiums are going up. *[applause]*

COOPER: Herman Cain, same question. Is there any aspect of so-called Obamacare that -- that you would keep?

CAIN: No. I think we all agree that Obamacare must be repealed because it is a disaster. And the more we learn about it and the more time goes along, the more we see. We're all in agreement with that.

But here's where I would start in answering that question. It's called H.R. 3400. This was introduced back in 2009, but you didn't hear a lot of talk about it. Instead of government being imposed on -- on our system, it imposes -- it basically passes market-centered, market-driven, patient-centered sort of reforms to allow association health plans, to allow loser pay laws, to allow insurance products to be sold across state lines, and a whole list of other things. So that's a great place to start.

It allows the patient and the doctors to make the decisions, not a bureaucrat. I'd start with HR-3400. [applause]

COOPER: Governor Perry, in the last debate, Governor Romney pointed out that Texas has one of the highest rates of uninsured children in the country, over one million kids. You did not get an opportunity to respond to that. What do you say? How do you explain that?

PERRY: Well, we've got one of the finest health care systems in the world in Texas. As a matter of fact, the Houston, Texas, Medical Center, there's more doctors and nurses that go to work there every morning than any other place in America. But the idea that you can't have access to health care, some of the finest health care in the world -- but we have a 1,200-mile border with Mexico, and the fact is we have a huge number of illegals that are coming into this country.

And they're coming into this country because the federal government has failed to secure that border. But they're coming here because there is a magnet. And the magnet is called jobs. And those people that hire illegals ought to be penalized.

And Mitt, you lose all of your standing, from my perspective, because you hired illegals in your home and you knew about it for a year. And the idea that you stand here before us and talk about that you're strong on immigration is on its face the height of hypocrisy. [laughter]

COOPER: Governor Romney?

ROMNEY: Rick, I don't think I've ever hired an illegal in my life. And so I'm afraid -- I'm looking forward to finding your facts on that, because that just doesn't --

PERRY: Well, I'll tell you what the facts are.

ROMNEY: Rick, again -- Rick, I'm speaking.

PERRY: You had the -- your newspaper -- the newspaper --

ROMNEY: I'm speaking. I'm speaking. I'm speaking. [crosstalk]

ROMNEY: You get 30 seconds. This is the way the rules work here, is that I get 60 seconds and then you get 30 second to respond. Right?

Anderson?

PERRY: And they want to hear you say that you knew you had illegals working at your --

ROMNEY: Would you please wait? Are you just going to keep talking?

PERRY: Yes, sir.

ROMNEY: Would you let me finish with what I have to say? [booing]

ROMNEY: Look, Rick --

COOPER: I thought Republicans follow the rules.

ROMNEY: This has been a tough couple of debates for Rick, and I understand that. And so you're going to get testy. [applause]

ROMNEY: But let's let -- I'll tell you what, let me take my time, and then you can take your time. All right?

PERRY: Great. Have at it.

ROMNEY: All right.

My time is this, which is I have in my state -- when I was governor, I took the action of empowering our state police to enforce immigration laws. When you were governor, you said, I don't want to build a fence. You put in place a magnet.

You talked about magnets. You put in place a magnet to draw illegals into the state, which was giving \$100,000 of tuition credit to illegals that come into this country, and then you have states -- the big states of illegal immigrants are California and Florida. Over the last 10 years, they've had no increase in illegal immigration.

Texas has had 60 percent increase in illegal immigrants in Texas. If there's someone who has a record as governor with regards to illegal immigration that doesn't stand up to muster, it's you, not me. [applause]

COOPER: Governor Perry, you have 30 seconds.

PERRY: You stood here in front of the American people and did not tell the truth that you had illegals working on your property. And the newspaper came to you and brought it to your attention, and you still, a year later, had those individuals working for you.

The idea that you can sit here and talk about any of us having an immigration issue is beyond me. I've got a strong policy. I've always been against amnesty. You, on the other hand, were for amnesty.

COOPER: I've got 30 seconds, then we've got move on to another immigration question.

ROMNEY: OK.

You wrote an op-ed in the newspaper saying you were open to amnesty. That's number one.

Number two, we hired a lawn company to mow our lawn, and they had illegal immigrants that were working there. And when that was pointed out to us, we let them go. And we went to them and said --

PERRY: A year later?

ROMNEY: You have a problem with allowing someone to finish speaking. And I suggest that if you want to become president of the United States, you have got to let both people speak. So first, let me speak. [*applause*]

ROMNEY: So we went to the company and we said, look, you can't have any illegals working on our property. I'm running for office, for Pete's sake, I can't have illegals. It turns out that once question, they hired someone who had falsified their documents, had documents, and therefore we fired them. And let me tell you, it is hard in this country as an individual homeowner to know if people who are contractors working at your home, if they have hired people that are illegal. If I'm president, we'll put in an E-Verify system, which you have opposed --

COOPER: Out of time.

ROMNEY: -- to make sure that we can find out who's here illegally and not, and crack down on people who come here illegally.

COOPER: All right. We're going to stay on the topic of immigration. [*applause*]

COOPER: We're going to stay on the topic of immigration. Everyone is going to get a chance to weigh in.

This is a question that was left at CNNPolitics.com. "As president, will you order completion of the physical border fence along the entire border between the U.S. and Mexico?" That's from Marilyn L.

Herman Cain, let me start with you. Obviously, over the weekend, you got a lot of headlines by saying you would have an electrified fence. You then later said it was -- you then later said it was a joke. And then last night, you said, "It might be electrified. I'm not walking away from that. I just don't want to offend anyone." [*laughter*]

So... [*applause*]

So would you build an entire fence along the entire border, and would you have it be electrified? [*laughter*]

CAIN: Allow me to give a serious answer. Yes, I believe we should secure the border for real, and it would be a combination of a fence, technology, as well as possibly boots on the ground for some of the more dangerous areas. I don't apologize at all for wanting to protect the American citizens and to protect our agents on the border, no. [*applause*]

Secondly, the second thing that I would do -- see, I believe in let's solve the whole problem. We must shut the back door so people can come in the front door. Secondly, promote the existing path to citizenship by cleaning up the bureaucracy in Washington, D.C.

Thirdly, enforce the laws -- the immigration laws that are already on the books. [*applause*]

And here's another one of these bold ideas by the non-politician up here. Empower the states to do what the federal government is not doing in terms of enforcing those laws. [*applause*]

COOPER: Governor Perry, you have -- you have the -- your state has the longest border with Mexico. Is it possible -- to the question -- is it possible to build a fence, an -- across the entire border?

PERRY: Sure. You can -- you can build a fence, but it takes anywhere between 10 and 15 years and \$30 billion. There's a better way, and that's to build a virtual defense zone, if you will, along that border, which -- not unlike what Herman's talking about, and you can do it with strategic fencing in the obvious places where it matters.

But the way you really stop the activities along that border that are illegal, whether it's the drug cartels or whether it's bringing in illegal weapons or whether it's illegal immigrants that are coming in, is to put boots on the ground.

I will tell you, Herman, you put a lot of boots on the ground. You use Predator drones that are being trained right up here at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada to use that real-time information to give those boots on the ground that information, and they can instantly move to those areas. And that is the way to shut that border down, to secure that border, and really make America safe from individuals, like those Iranians that are using the drug cartels to penetrate this country.

COOPER: Congresswoman Bachmann, do you agree with Governor Perry? [*applause*]

BACHMANN: Well, I think the person who really has a problem with illegal immigration in the country is President Obama. It's his uncle and his aunt who are illegal aliens... [applause] ... who've been allowed to stay in this country, despite the fact that they're illegal.

This last Saturday, I was the very first candidate that signed a pledge that said that, by a date certain, I will build a double-walled fence with -- with an area of security neutrality in between. I will build that, because this is what we know. This is an economics issue and a jobs issue. Every year...

COOPER: You're saying you would build a fence along the entire border? **BACHMANN:** I will build it on the entire border, and I'll tell you why. Every year, it costs this country \$113 billion in the costs that we put out to pay for illegal aliens. It costs the state and local government of that amount \$82 billion. For every household of an American citizen, it costs us \$1,000 a year. We are robbing the household of Americans who can't afford that.

I will build the fence. I will enforce English as the official language of the United States government. [applause]

And every -- every person who comes into this country will have to agree that they will not receive taxpayer-subsidized benefits of any American citizen...

COOPER: Time.

BACHMANN: Thank you.

COOPER: Governor Perry, does that -- can you actually -- does that make sense? She says she can build the -- the fence along the entire border.

PERRY: As I said, you can build that fence, but by the time that fence gets built...

COOPER: She's also talking about your taxpayer-subsidized benefits.

PERRY: But my -- my point is that, by the time that fence gets built, there is a lot better way than to stand here and to -- to play to some group of people somewhere and say, "We're going to build a fence," and then wipe our hands of it.

I've been dealing with this border for 10 years as the governor. And the reason that we have this issue is because the federal government has failed miserably to defend and secure that border.

BACHMANN: Which is why we build...

[crosstalk]

PERRY: You know, for someone that's been in the United States Congress to -- to lecture me on the issues that are going on, on that border is not right. Let me tell you, we've had to deal with that issue in the state of Texas. We've had to deal with the impact on our state. And I put \$400 million on that border of Texas, taxpayers' money, Texas Ranger recon teams there.

We know how to secure the border. I shared with you earlier how to do it. You put the boots on the ground, the aviation assets in the air, and you secure that border.

COOPER: Governor...

BACHMANN: Anderson, can I respond?

COOPER: He wasn't talking about you directly.

BACHMANN: No, he did respond.

ROMNEY: Let's step back. I think it's important for us as Republicans on this stage to say something which hasn't been said. And that is I think every single person here loves legal immigration. We respect people who come here legally.

[cheering and applause]

ROMNEY: And the reason we're so animated about stopping illegal immigration is there are 4.5 million people who want to come here who are in line legally, we want that to happen in an orderly and legal process.

And in terms of how to secure the border, it's really not that hard. You have a fence, you have enough Border Patrol agents to oversee the fence, and you turn off the magnets. And that's employers that hire people who they know are here illegally.

That's why you have an E-Verify system so they can know that. And, number two, you turn off the magnets like tuition breaks or other breaks that draw people into this country illegally. It is not that hard. We have to have the political will to get the job done.

And, Governor Perry, you say you have got the experience. It's a bit like saying that, you know, the college coach that has lost 40 games in a row has the experience to go to the NFL.

But the truth is, California -- I'll say it again, California and Florida have both had no increase in illegal immigration and yours is up 60 percent...

COOPER: Time.

ROMNEY: ... over the last 10 years.

COOPER: Governor Perry, 30 seconds to respond.

PERRY: Well, the bottom line is that we have a federal government that has failed. There is a clear problem here. And he hit the nail on the head a while ago. He said there was a magnet of people that will hire illegals. And you are number one on that list, sir.

And people need to understand that. You're one of the problems, Mitt.

COOPER: I think we've been down that road.

ROMNEY: Yes...

[crosstalk]

ROMNEY: We've been down that road sufficiently. It sounds like the audience agrees with me.

COOPER: We are continuing on immigration. We have a question in the audience.

[cheering and applause]

ROBERT ZAVALA, LAS VEGAS RESIDENT: Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to ask my question. We have 50 million Latinos and not all of us are illegal. What is the message from you guys to our Latino community?

COOPER: Speaker Gingrich? President Obama got I think 67 percent of the Latino vote last time around.

GINGRICH: Look, I think that there's a very clear message to Americans of all backgrounds. Latinos, Korean-Americans, Vietnamese-Americans, there are hundreds of different groups who come to America.

As Governor Romney said, I think anybody who understands America has to be proud of our record as the country which has been the most open in history to legal immigration.

But the truth is most Latinos in the United States aren't immigrants. Most Latinos in the United States now have been born in the United States. And the fact is they want virtually exactly what everyone else wants.

They want an economy that is growing. They want a job that has take home pay. They want access to health insurance that they can afford. They want a chance to get educated that is actually useful and worthwhile. They want to be able to know that their family is going to grow up in safety. And they want to have a chance that their country is going to work to give their children and their grandchildren a better future.

I think we have to have the same message for every American of every ethnic background that we want to make America work again. And you'll know it's working because you will have a job and you'll have a chance to take care of your family.

[cheering and applause]

COOPER: Congressman Paul, there's some Latino voters who believe that some of these strong anti-immigration laws -- anti-illegal immigration laws are actually anti-Latino laws. What do you say to them?

PAUL: Well, I think some people do believe that. I think a fence is symbolic of that. And I can understand why somebody might look at that. But when we approach this immigration problem, we should look at the incentives and that -- or the mandates from the federal government saying that you must educate, you must give them free education.

You have to remove these incentives. But I don't think the answer is a fence whatsoever. But in order to attract Latino votes, I think, you know, too long this country has always put people in groups. They penalize people because they're in groups, and then they reward people because they're in groups.

But following up on what Newt was saying, we need a healthy economy, we wouldn't be talking about this. We need to see everybody as an individual. And to me, seeing everybody as an individual means their liberties are protected as individuals and they're treated that way and they're never penalized that way.

So if you have a free and prosperous society, all of a sudden this group mentality melts away. As long as there's no abuse -- one place where there's still a lot of discrimination in this country is in our court systems. And I think the minorities come up with a short hand in our court system.

COOPER: Herman Cain, the 14th Amendment allows that anybody born in the United States is an American citizen. Should that change?

CAIN: I want to go back and answer this question first, OK? And that is, my message to Latinos, blacks, whites, and all Americans is that we must first start with significantly boosting this economy, which is on life support.

This is why I have put forth a very bold plan, and I'm not afraid to try and sell it to the American people. I'm not afraid to fight for it when I become president of the United States of America. So that's my message.

If we have this economy growing, people will be able to take care of their families and go after their American dream. And until we boost this economy, all of us are going to suffer for a long time.

COOPER: Then let me ask the question of Governor Perry.

Governor Perry, the 14th Amendment allows anybody. A child of illegal immigrants who is born here is automatically an American citizen. Should that change?

PERRY: Well, let me address Herman's issue that he just talked about.

COOPER: Actually, I'd rather you answer that question.

PERRY: I understand that. You get to ask the questions, I get to answer like I want to. And Herman talked about --

COOPER: That's actually a response, that's not an answer, but go ahead.

PERRY: -- the issue of how we get this country back working. And truly, the plan that I laid out last week, where we talk about the energy industry and this treasure trove that we have under this country, and we need to recognize that the administration that we have today is blocking mining that could be going on in the state of Nevada. I talked to Brian Sandoval before I came in here today. You have an administration that is killing jobs because they want to move us to a green energy. You have a secretary of energy who has basically said he wants to see gas prices up close to the European model. The president himself said electricity rates are necessarily going to skyrocket.

That's what we've got to stop. That's the reason we got to have a president of the United States that understands that if you get Americans working, and it addresses these issues that we have in this country, then the fastest way to do it is open up these federal --

COOPER: Time.

PERRY: -- plants, to pull back those regulations, and get America working again.

COOPER: Time.

[commercial break]

COOPER: To the question on the 14th Amendment, do you support repealing the 14th Amendment?

PERRY: No.

COOPER: No, you do not?

PERRY: I do not.

COOPER: Congresswoman Bachmann, do you support it?

BACHMANN: I think there's a very real issue with magnets in this country. And I think the issue that you're referring to is the issue of anchor babies. And that's an issue that -- I was just in Arizona this last weekend, and the state is very concerned, because when someone comes illegally across the border, specifically for the purpose of utilizing American resources for having a baby here, then all of the welfare benefits then attach to that baby.

This is an issue that we don't have to deal with the Constitution. This is an issue that we can deal with legislatively. And there are a lot of Americans that would like us to deal with this issue of anchor babies legislatively. [applause]

COOPER: Senator Santorum?

SANTORUM: I'd like to address the issue that the gentleman brought up, which is, what are we going to say to the Latino community? And not one person mentioned the issue of family, faith, marriage.

This is a community that is a faith-filled community, that family is at the center of that community. I disagree in some respects with Congressman Paul, who says the country is founded on the individual.

The basic building block of a society is not an individual. It's the family. That's the basic unit of society. [applause]

SANTORUM: And the Latino community understands that. They understand the importance of faith and marriage. They understand that bond that builds that solid foundation, and that inculcation of faith and religious freedom. And I think the Latino community knows that's at stake in this country.

There's a lot going on right now that's eroding our religious freedom, that's eroding the traditional values of marriage and family. And there's one candidate up here who consistently sounds that theme.

Look, I'm for jobs, too. I have got an economic plan, and I agree with everything that's been said. But we keep running roughshod over the fact that family in America and faith in America is being crushed by the courts and our government, and someone has stand up and fight for those institutions. [applause]

COOPER: Time.

Congressman Paul, you were referenced directly. Thirty seconds.

PAUL: Well, I would like to explain that rights don't come in bunches. Rights come as individuals, they come from a God, and they come as each individual has a right to life and liberty.

But I might add about the border control and the Latino vote, is we lack resources there. I think we should have more border guards on it, a more orderly transition, and run it much better. But where are our resources?

You know, we worry more about the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We need to bring the guard units home and the units back here so we can have more personnel on our border. [applause]

COOPER: We have a question in the audience.

QUESTION: My question for you is, do you support opening the national nuclear repository at Yucca Mountain?

COOPER: Speaker Gingrich, we'll start with you.

[crosstalk]

COOPER: Sorry, go ahead.

GINGRICH: Look, we -- we worked on this when I was speaker. I think that it has to be looked at scientifically. But I think at some point we have to find a safe method of taking care of nuclear waste. And today, because this has been caught up in a political fight, we have small units of nuclear waste all over this country in a way that is vastly more dangerous to the United States than finding a method of keeping it in a very, very deep place that would be able to sustain 10,000 or 20,000 and 30,000 years of geological safety.

COOPER: Is Yucca Mountain that place?

GINGRICH: I'm not a scientist. I mean, Yucca Mountain certainly was picked by the scientific community as one of the safest places in the United States. It has always had very deep opposition here in Nevada. And, frankly...

COOPER: You were for opening it in Congress, right?

GINGRICH: Huh?

COOPER: When you were in the Congress, you were...

[crosstalk]

GINGRICH: When I was in Congress, frankly, I worked with the Nevada delegation to make sure that there was time for scientific studies. But we have to find some method of finding a very geologically stable place, and most geologists believe that, in fact, Yucca Mountain is that.

COOPER: Congressman Paul, you oppose this?

PAUL: Yes. Yes, I've -- I've opposed this. We've had votes in the Congress. There was a time when I voted with two other individuals, the two congressmen from Nevada. And I approach it from a state's rights position. What right does 49 states have to punish one state and say, "We're going to put our garbage in your state"? I think that's wrong.

But I think it's very serious. I think it's very serious. But quite frankly, the government shouldn't be in the business of subsidizing any form of energy. And nuclear energy, I think, is a good source of energy, but they still get subsidies. Then they assume this responsibility. Then we as politicians and the bureaucrats get involved in this. And then we get involved with which state's going to get stuck with the garbage.

So I would say, the more the free market handles this and the more you deal with property rights and no subsidies to any form of energy, the easier this problem would be solved.

COOPER: Governor Romney, where do you stand on this? [applause]

ROMNEY: Congressman Paul was right on that. [applause]

I don't always agree with him, but I do on that. The -- the idea that 49 states can tell Nevada, "We want to give you our

nuclear waste," doesn't make a lot of sense. I think the people of Nevada ought to have the final say as to whether they want that, and my guess is that for them to say yes to something like that, someone's going to have to offer them a pretty good deal, as opposed to having the federal government jam it down their throat. [applause]

And by the way, if -- if Nevada says, "Look, we don't want it," then let other states make bids and say, hey, look, we'll take it. Here's a geological site that we've evaluated. Here's the compensation we want for taking it. We want you electric companies around the country that are using nuclear fuel to compensate us a certain amount per kilowatt hour, a certain amount per ton of this stuff that comes.

Let -- let the free market work. And on that basis, the places that are geologically safe, according to science, and where the people say the deal's a good one will decide where we put this stuff. That's the right course for America. [applause]

COOPER: Governor Perry?

PERRY: You know, from time to time, Mitt and I don't agree. But on this one, he's hit it, the nail, right on the head. And I'll just add that when you think about France, who gets over 70 percent of their energy from nuclear power, the idea that they deal with this issue, that their classification, and that the innovation -- and, Congressman Paul, you're correct when it comes to allowing the states to compete with each other. That is the answer to this.

We need to have a -- a -- a discussion in -- in this country about our 10th Amendment and the appropriateness of it, as it's been eroded by Washington, D.C., for all these many years, whether it's health care, whether it's education, or whether it's dealing with energy. We don't need to be subsidizing energy in any form or fashion, allow the states to make the decision. And some state out there will see the economic issue, and they will have it in their state.

COOPER: We're going to move on to an issue very important here in the state of Nevada and throughout the West. We have a question from the hall.

QUESTION: Yeah, my question is, those of us who own property here in Nevada have been devastated by the real estate bubble. What would you do as president to help fix the overall problem of real estate and foreclosures in America?

COOPER: Senator Santorum, Nevada has the highest rate of foreclosure. **SANTORUM:** Yeah, I mean, it's -- it's a situation right now where obviously the market's in -- has been decimated. And so now you're looking at, how do you repair it? The problem is -- in the first place, is that several people up here, the, quote, "businesspeople," supported the TARP, supported the bailout. Governors Perry, Romney...

PERRY: Wrong.

SANTORUM: No, you wrote a letter on the day of the vote -- you wrote a letter on the day of the vote, Governor, saying to vote for the plan. That's what you -- I mean, that -- the letter's been...

PERRY: No, I didn't.

SANTORUM: Yes, you did, Governor. You sent...

COOPER: You'll have a chance to respond. Let him finish.

SANTORUM: Joe Manchin signed it with you. So you -- you supported it. Governor Romney and Herman Cain all supported the -- the TARP program, which started this ball...

CAIN: Not all of it. [laughter]

SANTORUM: I mean, I -- I mean, you guys complain about Governor Romney flip-flopping. I mean, look at what's going on here. I mean, the -- the bottom line is, you all supported it, you all started this ball rolling, where the government injected itself in trying to make -- trying to fix the market with the government top-down trying to do it, and managed decline. And what happened was, people who did things that were wrong invested in things, took risks, were bailed out, and the folks who acted responsibly are now getting hurt because their houses have gone down in value. We need to let the market work, and that's what hasn't been happening so far.

COOPER: I'm going to allow each of the three of you to respond.

Governor Perry, you have 30 seconds.

PERRY: The fact is, Rick just has that wrong. We wrote a letter to Congress asking them to act. What we meant by acting was, cut the regulations, cut the taxation burden, not passing TARP.

There is clearly a letter out of our office that says that, Rick. I'll get you a copy of it so you'll understand it.

SANTORUM: Hold on. I need to respond to that.

He sent a letter the day of the vote on the floor of the House saying, pass the economic plan. There was only one plan, and that was the plan that was voted on the floor. It was TARP.

You sent a letter on that day saying, vote for that plan. Now, you can send a letter later saying I didn't mean it, but when you

said it, it was the only plan that was in play, and that was the TARP plan.

COOPER: Governor Perry -- do you want to respond, Governor Perry?

PERRY: I'm just telling you I know what we sent, I know what the intention was. You can read it any way you want, but the fact of the matter, I wasn't for TARP, and have talked about it for years since then.

COOPER: Governor Romney, 30 seconds.

ROMNEY: There's an effort on the part of people in Washington to think somehow they know better than markets, how to rebalance America's economy. And the idea of the federal government running around and saying, hey, we're going to give you some money for trading in your old car, or we're going to give you a few thousand bucks for buying a new house, or we're going to keep banks from foreclosing if you can't make your payments, these kind of actions on the part of government haven't worked.

The right course is to let markets work. And in order to get markets to work and to help people, the best we can do is to get the economy going. And that's why the fundamental restructuring I've described is so essential to help homeowners and people across this country. *[applause]*

COOPER: Mr. Cain, I want you to be able to respond. Thirty seconds.

CAIN: I have said before that we were in a crisis at the end of 2008 with this potential financial meltdown. I supported the concept of TARP, but then, when this administration used discretion and did a whole lot of things that the American people didn't like, I was then against it. So yes, and I'm owning up to that.

Now, getting back to the gentleman's question in terms of what we need to do, we need to get government out of the way. It starts with making sure that we can boost this economy and then reform Dodd-Frank and reform a lot of these other regulations that have gotten in the way --

COOPER: Time.

CAIN: -- and let the market do it just like Mitt has talked about.

COOPER: Congresswoman Bachmann, does the federal government have a role in keeping people in their homes, saving people from foreclosure, in the state of Nevada?

BACHMANN: That was the question that was initially asked. And what I want to say is this -- every day I'm out somewhere in the United States of America, and most of the time I'm talking to moms across this country. When you talk about housing, when you talk about foreclosures, you're talking about women who are at the end of their rope because they're losing their nest for their children and for their family. And there are women right now all across this country and moms across this country whose husbands, through no fault of their own, are losing their job, and they can't keep that house. And there are women who are losing that house.

I'm a mom. I talk to these moms.

I just want to say one thing to moms all across America tonight. This is a real issue. It's got to be solved.

President Obama has failed you on this issue of housing and foreclosures. I will not fail you on this issue. I will turn this country around.

We will turn the economy around. We will create jobs. That's how you hold on to your house.

Hold on, moms out there. It's not too late.

COOPER: We have another question. This one is a Twitter question.

"How do you explain the Occupy Wall Street movement happening across the country? And how does it relate with your message?"

Herman Cain, I've got to ask you, you said, -- two weeks ago, you said, "Don't blame Wall Street, don't blame the big banks. If you don't have a job, and you're not rich, blame yourself."

That was two weeks ago. The movement has grown. Do you still say that? *[applause]*

CAIN: Yes, I do still say that. And here's why. *[applause]*

CAIN: I still stand by my statement, and here's why.

They might be frustrated with Wall Street and the bankers, but they're directing their anger at the wrong place. Wall Street didn't put in failed economic policies. Wall Street didn't spend a trillion dollars that didn't do any good. Wall Street isn't going around the country trying to sell another \$450 billion. They ought to be over in front of the White House taking out their frustration. *[applause]*

So I do stand by them.

COOPER: Congressman Paul, you've been -- Congressman Paul, you've been critical of Governor Romney for -- for holding fundraisers with -- with Wall Streeters. Do you think he understands what the protest is about? Do you understand?

PAUL: Well, I think Mr. Cain has blamed the victims. There's a lot of people that are victims of this business cycle. We can't blame the victims.

But we also have to point -- I'd go to Washington as well as Wall Street, but I'd go over to the Federal Reserve. *[applause]*

They -- they create the financial bubbles. And you have to understand that you can't solve these problems if you don't know where these bubbles come from.

But then, when the bailout came and supported by both parties, you have to realize, oh, wait, Republicans were still in charge. So the bailouts came from both parties. Guess who they bailed out? The big corporations of people who were ripping off the people in the derivatives market. And they said, oh, the world's going to come to an end unless we bail out all the banks. So the banks were involved, and the Federal Reserve was involved.

But who got stuck? The middle class got stuck. They got stuck. They lost their jobs, and they lost their houses. If you had to give money out, you should have given it to people who were losing their mortgages, not to the banks. *[applause]*

COOPER: Mr. Cain, do you want to respond? He referenced you. So if you want to respond, you have 30 seconds.

CAIN: All I want to say is that representative Paul is partly right, but he's mixing problems here. It's more than one problem. Look, the people -- the banks -- yes, the banks and the businesses on Wall Street, yes, the way that was administered was not right.

But my point is this: What are the people who are protesting want from bankers on Wall Street, to come downstairs and write them a check? This is what we don't understand. Take -- go and get to the source of the problem, is all I'm saying.

COOPER: I've got to give you 30 seconds.

CAIN: And that's the White House.

COOPER: And then we'll go to Governor Romney.

PAUL: Yes, the argument is it's -- the program was OK, but it was mismanaged. But I work on the assumption that government's not very capable of managing almost anything... *[applause]* ... so you shouldn't put that much trust in the government. You have -- you have to trust the marketplace. And when the government gets involved, they have to deal with fraud. And how many people have gone to jail either in the government, Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, that participated in this? And nobody suffers the consequences. All these investigations, and yet the people who lose their jobs and lose their houses, it's their fault, according -- that's why they're on Wall Street. And we can't blame them. We have to blame the business cycle...

COOPER: Time.

PAUL: ... and the economic policies that led to this disaster. *[applause]*

COOPER: Governor Romney, you -- you originally called the protests "dangerous." You said it was class warfare. You recently sounded more sympathetic. Where do you stand now? What is your message to those people protesting?

ROMNEY: Look, we can spend our time talking about what happened three years ago and what the cause was of our collapse. But let's talk about what's happened over the last three years. We've had a president responsible for this economy for the last three years, and he's failed us.

He's failed us in part because he has no idea how the private sector works or how to create jobs. On every single issue, he's made it harder for our economy to reboot. And as a result, we have 25 million Americans out of work or stopped looking for work or in part-time work and can't get full-time employed. Home values going down. You have median income in America that in the last three years has dropped by 10 percent.

Americans are hurting across this country, and the president's out there campaigning. Why isn't he governing? He doesn't -- he doesn't have a jobs plan even now. This -- this is a critical time for America. *[applause]*

And I -- and I can tell you that this is time to have someone who understands how the economy works, who can get America working again. Instead of dividing and blaming, as this president is, let's grow America again and have jobs that are the envy of the world. And I know how to do it.

COOPER: We've got to take a quick break. We're going to continue on the other side. We'll be right back.

[commercial break]

COOPER: I'm Anderson Cooper, the western Republican presidential debate, live from the Venetian in Las Vegas. As you

watch the debate tonight, send us your comments and questions for the candidates on Twitter. Use the hashtag #CNNDebate. Also contact us on Facebook and cnn.com.

When we come back, the right to bears and should a candidate's faith matter? We'll be right back.

[commercial break]

COOPER: And welcome back to the CNN GOP debate live from the Venetian in Las Vegas. Let's continue. We've got an e-mail question that was left at cnnpolitics.com. This is from a Mike Richards who says: "With the controversy surrounding Robert Jeffress, is it acceptable to let the issue of a candidate's faith shape the debate?"

Senator Santorum, this is in reference to a Baptist pastor who, at the Values Voter Summit, after introducing Governor Rick Perry, said of -- said that "Mitt Romney is not a Christian," and that "Mormonism is a cult." Those were his words.

Should... [booing]

COOPER: Should voters pay attention to a candidate's religion?

SANTORUM: I think they should pay attention to the candidate's values, what the candidate stands for. [cheering and applause]

SANTORUM: That's what is at play. And the person's faith -- and you look at that faith and what the faith teaches with respect to morals and values that are reflected in that person's belief structure. So that's -- those are important things.

I -- I'm a Catholic. Catholic has social teachings. Catholic has teachings as to what's right and what's wrong. And those are legitimate things for voters to look at, to say if you're a faithful Catholic, which I try to be -- fall short all the time, but I try to be -- and -- and it's a legitimate thing to look at as to what the tenets and teachings of that faith are with respect to how you live your life and -- and how you would govern this country.

With respect to what is the road to salvation, that's a whole different story. That's not applicable to what -- what the role is of being the president or a senator or any other job. [applause]

COOPER: Speaker Gingrich, you agree with that?

GINGRICH: Well, I think if the question is, does faith matter? Absolutely. How can you have a country which is founded on truths which begins we are endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights? How can you have the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 which says religion, morality and knowledge being important, education matters. That's the order: religion, morality and knowledge.

Now, I happen to think that none of us should rush in judgment of others in the way in which they approach God. And I think that all of us up here I believe would agree. [applause]

But I think all of us would also agree that there's a very central part of your faith in how you approach public life. And I, frankly, would be really worried if somebody assured me that nothing in their faith would affect their judgments, because then I'd wonder, where's your judgment -- how can you have judgment if you have no faith? And how can I trust you with power if you don't pray? [applause]

Who you pray to, how you pray, how you come close to God is between you and God. But the notion that you're endowed by your creator sets a certain boundary on what we mean by America.

COOPER: Governor Perry, Mitt Romney asked you to repudiate the comments of that pastor who introduced you on that stage. He didn't make the comments on the stage; he made them afterward in an interview. Will you repudiate those comments?

ROMNEY: Well, our faith -- I can no more remove my faith than I can that I'm the son of a tenant farmer. I mean, the issue, are we going to be individuals who stand by our faith? I have said I didn't agree with that individual's statement. And our founding fathers truly understood and had an understanding of -- of freedom of religion.

And this country is based on, as -- as Newt talked about, these values that are so important as we go forward. And the idea that we should not have our freedom of -- of religion to be taken away by any means, but we also are a country that is free to express our opinions. That individual expressed an opinion. I didn't agree with it, Mitt, and I said so. But the fact is, Americans understand faith. And what they've lost faith in is the current resident of the White House. [applause]

COOPER: Time.

Governor Romney, is that -- is that acceptable to you?

ROMNEY: You know, with -- with regards to the disparaging comments about my faith, I've heard worse, so I'm not going to lose sleep over that. [laughter]

What I actually found was most troubling in what the reverend said in the introduction was he said, in choosing our nominee, we should inspect his religion. And someone who is a good moral person is not someone who we should select; instead, we should choose someone who subscribes to our religious belief.

That -- that idea that we should choose people based upon their religion for public office is what I find to be most troubling, because the founders of this country went to great length to make sure -- and even put it in the Constitution -- that we would not choose people who represent us in government based upon their religion, that this would be a nation that recognized and respected other faiths, where there's a plurality of faiths, where there was tolerance for other people and faiths. That's bedrock principle.

And it was that principle, Governor, that I wanted you to be able to, no, no, that's wrong, Reverend Jeffress. Instead of saying as you did, "Boy, that introduction knocked the ball out of the park," I'd have said, "Reverend Jeffress, you got that wrong. We should select people not based upon their faith." Even though -- and I don't suggest you distance yourself from your faith any more than I would. But the concept that we select people based on the church or the synagogue they go to, I think, is a very dangerous and -- and enormous departure from the principles of our -- of our Constitution. [applause]

COOPER: Would you still like him to say that?

UNKNOWN: I'm sorry?

COOPER: Would -- would you still like the governor to say that? Or was that something you wanted him to...

ROMNEY: I'll let him -- that's his choice.

COOPER: Do you want to respond to that, Governor Perry?

PERRY: I have. I said I did not agree with the -- Pastor Jeffress's remarks. I don't agree with them. I -- I can't apologize any more than that.

ROMNEY: That's fine.

COOPER: We've got a question from the audience.

QUESTION: Currently, there's a deficit reduction measure to cut defense spending by \$500 billion. Would you support such a reduction in defense spending? And if elected president, how will you provide a strong national defense?

COOPER: Congresswoman Bachmann, should defense be cut?

BACHMANN: Well, \$500 billion is the amount that the questioner had mentioned. And don't forget, this was an historic week when it came to American foreign policy.

We saw potentially an international assassination attempt from Iran on American soil. That says something about Iran, that they disrespect the United States so much, that they would attempt some sort of heinous act like that.

Then, we saw the president of the United States engage American troops in a fourth conflict in a foreign land. This is historic.

Then, on Sunday, we heard the reports that now that -- in Iraq, the 5,000 troops that were going to be left there won't even be granted immunity by Iraq. This is how disrespected the United States is in the world today, and it's because of President Obama's failed policies.

He's taken his eyes off the number one issue in the world. That's an Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. That makes all of us in much danger.

COOPER: Time.

BACHMANN: And the president of Iran is a genocidal maniac. We need to stand up against Iran. [applause]

COOPER: Congresswoman --

BACHMANN: And as president of the United States, I will. We will be respected again in the world.

COOPER: The question though was about budget cuts. And is everything on the table in terms of cutting the budget?

BACHMANN: Absolutely everything.

COOPER: So defense spending would be on the table, should be?

BACHMANN: Defense spending is on the table, but again, Anderson, now with the president, he put us in Libya. He is now putting us in Africa. We already were stretched too thin, and he put our Special Operations Forces in Africa.

COOPER: I just want to make sure. OK. It's on the table.

BACHMANN: It's on the table, but we cannot cut it by \$500 billion. We can't do that to our brave men and women who are on the ground fighting for us.

COOPER: Speaker Gingrich?

GINGRICH: I mean, if you want to understand how totally broken Washington is, look at this entire model of the super committee, which has now got a magic number to achieve. And if it doesn't achieve the magic number, then we'll all have to shoot ourselves in the head so that when they come back with a really dumb idea to merely cut off our right leg, we'll all be grateful that they're only semi-stupid instead of being totally stupid. [*applause*]

GINGRICH: Now, the idea that you have a bunch of historically illiterate politicians who have no sophistication about national security trying to make a numerical decision about the size of the defense budget tells you everything you need to know about the bankruptcy of the current elite in this country in both parties. The fact is, we ought to first figure out what threaten us, we ought to figure out what strategies will respond to that. We should figure out what structures we need for those strategies. We should then cost them.

I helped found the Military Reform Caucus. I'm a hawk, but I'm a cheap hawk. But the fact is, to say I'm going to put the security of the United States up against some arbitrary budget number is suicidally stupid.

COOPER: Congressman Paul, you've proposed -- [*applause*]

COOPER: Congressman Paul, you just proposed eliminating the Departments of Commerce, Education, Energy, Interior, Housing and Urban Development. You say it will save a trillion dollars in one year. [*applause*]

COOPER: You're proposing a 15 percent cut to the Defense Department. Can you guarantee national security will not be hurt by that?

PAUL: I think it would be enhanced. I don't want to cut any defense. And you have to get it straight. There's a lot of money spent in the military budget that doesn't do any good for our defense.

How does it help us to keep troops in Korea all these years? We're broke. We have to borrow this money.

Why are we in Japan? Why do we subsidize Germany, and they subsidize their socialized system over there? Because we pay for it. We're broke.

And this whole thing that this can't be on the table, I'll tell you what, this debt bubble is the thing you better really worry about, because it's imploding on us right now. It's worldwide.

We are no more removed from this than man the man on the moon. It's going to get much worse.

And to cut military spending is a wise thing to do. We would be safer if we weren't in so many places.

We have an empire. We can't afford it. The empires always bring great nations down. We spread ourselves too thinly around the world. This is what's happened throughout history, and we're doing it to ourselves.

The most recent empire to fail was an empire that went into, of all places, Afghanistan...

COOPER: Time.

PAUL: ... they went broke. So where are we? In Afghanistan. I say it's time to come home. [*cheering and applause*]

COOPER: It's time.

We have a Twitter question. Given that Israel has just negotiated with Palestine for a soldier, would any of you negotiate for a hostage?

Herman Cain, let me ask this to you. A few hours ago you were asked by Wolf Blitzer, if al Qaeda had an American soldier in captivity, and they demanded the release of everyone at Guantanamo Bay, would you release them? And you said, quote: "I can see myself authorizing that kind of a transfer. Can you explain?"

CAIN: The rest of the statement was quite simply, you would have to consider the entire situation. But let me say this first, I would have a policy that we do not negotiate with terrorists. We have to lay that principle down first.

Now being that you have to look at each individual situation and consider all the facts. The point that I made about this particular situation is that I'm sure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had to consider a lot of things before he made that.

So on the surface, I don't think we can say he did the right thing or not. A responsible decision-maker would have considered everything.

COOPER: But you're saying you could -- I mean, in your words, you've said that I could see myself authorizing that kind of a transfer. Isn't that negotiating with, in this case, al Qaeda?

CAIN: I don't recall him saying that it was al Qaeda-related.

COOPER: Yes, he did. He said...

CAIN: Well, I don't really -- my policy will be we cannot negotiate with terrorists. That's where we have to start as a fundamental principle.

COOPER: Senator Santorum?

SANTORUM: Oh, absolutely not. I mean, you can't negotiate with terrorists, period.

To address Congressman Paul's answer and the other answer on military spending, I would absolutely not cut one penny out of military spending. The first order of the federal government, the only thing the federal government can do that no other level of government can do is protect us. It is the first duty of the president of the United States is to protect us. [*applause*]

SANTORUM: And we should have the resources -- we should have all the resources in place to make sure that we can defend our borders, that we can make sure that when we engage in foreign countries, we do so to succeed.

That has been the problem in this administration. We've had political objectives instead of objectives for success. And that's why we haven't succeeded. And as Michele said and correctly said, the central threat right now is Iran.

The disrespect, yes, but it's more than that. They sent a message. The two countries that they went after was the leader of the Islamic world, Saudi Arabia, and the leader of the, quote, "secular world," the United States.

This was a call by Iran to say we are the ones who are going to be the supreme leader of the Islamic world...

COOPER: Time.

SANTORUM: ... and we are going to be the supreme leader of the secular world. And that's why they attacked here. And, by the way, they did it in coordination...

COOPER: Time.

SANTORUM: ... with Central and South Americans, which I have been talking about and writing about and talking about for 10 years.

COOPER: Congressman Paul, you were referenced in that answer, 30 seconds.

PAUL: Well, I think we're on economic suicide if we're not even willing to look at some of these overseas expenditures, 150 bases -- 900 bases, 150 different countries. We have enough weapons to blow up the world about 20-25 times. We have more weapons than all the other countries put together essentially.

And we want to spend more and more, and you can't cut a penny? I mean, this is why we're at an impasse. I want to hear somebody up here willing to cut something. Something real. [*cheering and applause*]

PAUL: This budget is in bad shape and the financial calamity is going to be much worse than anybody ever invading this country. Which country -- are they going to invade this country? They can't even shoot a missile at us.

COOPER: We have a question in the hall that gets to your question. The question in the hall on foreign aid? Yes, ma'am.

VICKI O'KEEFE, BOULDER CITY, NEVADA: The American people are suffering in our country right now. Why do we continue to send foreign aid to other countries when we need all the help we can get for ourselves?

COOPER: Governor Perry, what about that? I mean... [*applause*]

PERRY: Absolutely. I think it's time for this country to have a very real debate about foreign aid. Clearly there are places. As a matter of fact, I think it's time for us to have a very serious discussion about defunding the United Nations. [*cheering and applause*]

PERRY: When you think about -- when you think about the Palestinian Authority circumventing those Oslo Accords and going to New York to try to create the conflict and to have themselves approved as a state without going through the proper channels is a travesty.

And I think it's time not only to have that entire debate about all of our foreign aid, but in particular the U.N. Why are we funding that organization? [*cheering and applause*]

COOPER: Governor Romney, should foreign aid be eliminated?

ROMNEY: Foreign aid has several elements. One of those elements is defense, is to make sure that we are able to have the defense resources we want in certain places of the world. That probably ought to fall under the Department of Defense budget rather than a foreign aid budget.

Part of it is humanitarian aid around the world. I happen to think it doesn't make a lot of sense for us to borrow money from the Chinese to go give to another country for humanitarian aid. We ought to get the Chinese to take care of the people that are -- and think of that borrowed money on today.

And finally there's a portion of our foreign aid that allows us to carry out our activities in the world such as what's happening in Pakistan where we're taking -- we're supplying our troops in Afghanistan through Pakistan.

But let me tell you: We're spending more on foreign aid than we ought to be spending. And Congressman Paul asked, is there a place we can cut the budget? Let me tell you where we cut the budget. Discretionary accounts you bring back to 2008 level. We get rid of Obamacare. Number three, we take Medicaid, turn it back to the states, grow it at only 1 percent to 2 percent per year. Number three, we cut -- number four, rather, we cut federal employment by at least 10 percent through attrition. And finally, we say to federal employees: You're not going to make more money than the people in the private sector who are paying for you. We link their compensation. [applause]

COOPER: Time.

Congressman Paul?

PAUL: On foreign aid, that should be the easiest thing to cut. It's not authorized in the Constitution that we can take money from you and give it to particular countries around the world. To me, foreign aid is taking money from poor people in this country and giving it to rich people in poor countries. And it becomes weapons of war. Essentially, no well -- no matter how well-motivated it is...

COOPER: Congressman Paul, would you cut aid to Israel?

PAUL: I would cut all foreign aid. I would treat everybody equally and fairly. And I don't think aid to Israel actually helps them. I think it teaches them to be dependent. We're on a bankruptcy course.

And -- and look at what's the result of all that foreign aid we gave to Egypt? I mean, their -- their dictator that we pumped up, we spent all these billions of dollars, and now there's a more hostile regime in Egypt. And that's what's happening all around Israel. That foreign aid makes Israel dependent on us. It softens them for their own economy. And they should have their sovereignty back. They should be able to deal with their neighbors...

COOPER: Time. Congresswoman Bachmann...

PAUL: ... at their own will. [applause]

COOPER: Should we cut foreign aid to Israel?

BACHMANN: No, we should not be cutting foreign aid to Israel. Israel is our greatest ally. The biggest problem is the fact... [applause] ... that the president -- the biggest problem with this administration in foreign policy is that President Obama is the first president since Israel declared her sovereignty put daylight between the United States and Israel. That heavily contributed to the current hostilities that we see in the Middle East region.

Cutting back on foreign aid is one thing. Being reimbursed by nations that we have liberated is another. We should look to Iraq and Libya to reimburse us for part of what we have done to liberate these nations. [applause]

Now, I need to add something on this issue of negotiating for hostages. This is a very serious issue. For any candidate to say that they would release the prisoners at Guantanamo in exchange for a hostage would be absolutely contrary to the historical nature of the United States and what we do in our policy. That's naive; we cannot do that. The United States has done well because we have an absolute policy: We don't negotiate.

COOPER: Herman Cain, I've got to give you 30 seconds, because she was referring to -- basically saying you were naive or if -- if that's what you were suggesting. **CAIN:** No, I -- I said that I believe in the philosophy of we don't negotiate with terrorists. I think -- I didn't say -- I would never agree to letting hostages in Guantanamo Bay go. No, that wasn't -- that wasn't the intent at all.

But let me go back to this, if I could, very quickly in the time that I have left, the question that you asked about, foreign aid. My approach is an extension of the Reagan approach: Peace through strength, which is peace through strength and clarity. If we clarify who our friends are, clarify who our enemies are, and stop giving money to our enemies, then we ought to continue to give money to our friends, like Israel.

COOPER: You have 30 seconds, Congressman Paul, and then we've got to go.

PAUL: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I don't want to make a statement. I want to ask a question. Are you all willing to condemn Ronald Reagan for exchanging weapons for hostages out of Iran? We all know that was done.

SANTORUM: That's not -- Iran was a sovereign country. It was not a terrorist organization, number one.

PAUL: Oh, they were our good friends back then, huh?

SANTORUM: They're not our good friends. They're -- they're -- they're a sovereign country, just like the -- the Palestinian Authority is not the good friends of Israel.

PAUL: He negotiated for hostages.

SANTORUM: There's -- there's a role -- we negotiated with hostages [inaudible] the Soviet Union. We've negotiated with

hostages, depending on the scale. But there's a difference between releasing terrorists from Guantanamo Bay in response to a terrorist demand...

PAUL: But they're all suspects. They're not terrorists. You haven't convicted them of anything.

SANTORUM: Then -- then -- then negotiating with other countries, where we may have an interest, and that is certainly a proper role for the United States, too.

COOPER: We've got to take a quick break. I do want to give Speaker Gingrich 30 seconds, and then...

GINGRICH: Just very straightforward. Callista and I did a film on Ronald Reagan. There's a very painful moment in the film when he looks in the camera and says, "I didn't think we did this. I'm against doing it. I went back and looked. The truth is, we did. It was an enormous mistake."

And he thought the Iranian deals with a terrible mistake.

COOPER: We're going to take a short break. Our debate though continues on the other side of the break, so stay tuned.

When we return, which candidate has the best chance to beat Barack Obama, and should it matter in your vote?

Stay with us. *[applause]*

[commercial break]

COOPER: And welcome back. The GOP debate is under way.

Let's talk about probably the most important issue to everybody on this stage, and probably just about everybody in this room, which is, who can beat President Barack Obama in this next election?

In today's new CNN/ORC poll, 41 percent of Republican voters think that Governor Romney has the best chance of beating the president. *[applause]*

COOPER: To Senator Santorum, you got one percent. Why shouldn't Republican voters go with the candidate they feel that can best beat President Obama?

SANTORUM: Well, the Pew poll last week asked how many people in this country can name any of us? And less than 50 percent could come up with even one. So, the idea that this has any relevance to people who aren't paying close attention to this debate is, in fact, irrelevant. What's relevant is to look at the track record.

No one in this field has won a swing state. Pennsylvania is a swing state. We win Pennsylvania, we win the election. The Republicans nominate it.

I've won it twice. I defeated a Democratic incumbent, winning it the first time, and I won the state of Pennsylvania, the only senator to win a state who was a conservative that George Bush lost. Bush lost it by 5, I won it by 6.

So, you have someone who is defeated and been matched up against three Democratic incumbents. I'm 3-0.

Nobody in this field has won a major race against a Democratic incumbent except me. No one has won a swing state except me as a conservative.

I didn't run as a Democrat in Texas when it was popular, won and win there. I didn't run as a liberal in 1994. I ran in 1994, the same year Mitt did in Massachusetts. He ran as a liberal, to the left of Kennedy, and lost. I ran as a conservative against James Carville and Paul Begala, and I won.

In 2002, he ran as a moderate. He ran as a moderate in -- in Massachusetts. I ran for re-election having sponsored and passed welfare reform, having authored the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act.

COOPER: Time.

SANTORUM: I was a -- a moral conservative, I was a foreign policy conservative...

COOPER: Time, Senator.

SANTORUM: ... I was a fiscal conservative, and I got elected in a state that hasn't elected a president since 1988 as a Republican.

COOPER: Thank you.

Governor Romney, I've got to give you 30 seconds, since he referenced you.

ROMNEY: I think the people of America are looking for someone who can beat President Obama and can get the country on the right track. And I believe that they've recognized that if they elect someone who's spent their life in politics that they're

not going to be able to post up well against President Obama and convince the American people of the truth of the -- of the principles that we believe in.

I believe that, having spent my life in the private sector, having actually created jobs is what allows me to have the kind of support that's going to allow me to replace President Obama and get the country on the right track again. That, for me, is a distinguishing feature that's going to get me elected as the president of the United States.

COOPER: Governor... [applause]

Governor Perry, was he referring to you?

PERRY: If you want to know how someone's going to act in the future, look how they act in the past. I mean, so, Mitt, while you were the governor of Massachusetts in that period of time, you were 47th in the nation in job creation. During that same period of time, we created 20 times more jobs. As a matter of fact, you'd created 40,000 jobs total in your four years. Last two months, we created more jobs than that in Texas.

What we need is someone who will draw a bright contrast between themselves and President Obama. And let me tell you one thing: I will draw that bright contrast.

COOPER: I've got to give you 30 seconds. Governor Romney?

ROMNEY: Yeah. With regards to track record in the past, Governor, you were the chairman of Al Gore's campaign, all right? [laughter] And there was a fellow -- there was a fellow Texan named George Bush running. So if we're looking at the past, I think we know where you were.

Secondly, our unemployment rate I got down to 4.7 percent, pretty darn good. I think a lot of people would be happy to have 4.7 percent. And with regards... [applause]

With regards to the -- to the record -- to the record in Texas, you probably also ought to tell people that if you look over the last several years, 40 percent, almost half the jobs created in Texas were created for illegal aliens, illegal immigrants.

PERRY: That is an absolute falsehood on its face, Mitt.

COOPER: You have 30 seconds, Governor Perry.

ROMNEY: It's actually -- it's actually...

PERRY: That is -- that is absolutely incorrect, sir.

ROMNEY: Well, take a look at the study.

PERRY: There's a third -- there's been a third party take a look at that study, and it is absolutely incorrect. The fact is, Texas has led the nation in job creation. eBay and Facebook and Caterpillar didn't come there because there weren't jobs and there wasn't an environment to be created.

That's what Americans are looking for. They're looking for somebody that they trust, that knows has the executive governing experience. I've got it. You failed as the governor of Massachusetts.

COOPER: I've got to give Governor Romney 30 seconds. He said you failed. [booing]

ROMNEY: I'm very proud of the fact -- actually, during the four years we were both governors, my unemployment rate in Massachusetts was lower than your unemployment rate in Texas. That's number one.