



Fact-checking Nevada's Republican Debate

For example, while ObamaCare went through its usual round of scrutiny and criticism during the Republican debate in Las Vegas, Minnesota Representative Michele Bachmann indicated that ObamaCare has proven to be so controversial and so unpopular that even the Obama administration is beginning to rescind some of its support for the healthcare overhaul.

"Even the Obama administration chose to reject part of Obamacare.... Now the administration is arguing with itself," said Bachmann.



While it is in fact true that there have been proposed changes to ObamaCare in an effort to provoke greater support from the American people, such as eliminating the long-term insurance program CLASS that is a part of ObamaCare, the administration has been an adamant defender of the healthcare plan overall.

Republicans have pointed to the administration's abandonment of the CLASS program as a sign of weakness, and an indication that ObamaCare has found critics even amongst its most ardent supporters. However, the *Associated Press* negates this position:

Unlike the central provisions of the health care law, the long-term insurance plan, called CLASS, was voluntary. From an accounting viewpoint, that was its fatal weakness.

Without some reason for large numbers of healthy people to sign up, experts warned all along that CLASS would attract too many people in frail health. Rising benefit costs would send premiums spiraling upward. Healthier people would drop out, and eventually taxpayers would have to bail CLASS out.

Obama's health insurance mandate, requiring nearly everyone to have insurance, protects his overhaul from a similar fate.

Similarly, Robert Bixby of the Concord Coalition — a nonpartisan group that supports cutting the federal deficit — said, "You have to have a broad risk pool. By mandating coverage, [Obamacare] creates a broad risk pool and that makes the system much more sustainable."

Another item that was the subject of some aggressive [fact-checking](#) is Herman Cain's "9-9-9" tax plan, which ultimately eradicates current taxes on income, payroll, capital gains and corporate profits and replace them with a 9 percent tax on income, a 9 percent business tax, and a 9 percent national sales tax. Cain's plan does not exempt food or medicine from sales taxes, but does exempt used items.

According to Cain, his plan does not increase taxes on those who are making the least amount of money.

However, as noted by a number of sources, Cain's portrayal is untrue. According to the Tax Policy



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Center, Cain's plan would, in fact, increase taxes on 84 percent of U.S. households, and would impact low and medium income households the hardest. That analysis found that households making between \$10,000 and \$20,000 yearly would see their taxes increase by almost \$3,000, approximately 950 percent.

That analysis confirms what other economists have been asserting virtually since Cain introduced his plan, that lower-income families are typically more harshly impacted by sales taxes because they spend a greater portion of their income than wealthy families do.

Cain has indicated that his tax plan does include additional tax deductions for people belonging to specific tax zones, but those additional deductions could not be factored in to the analysis because the Cain camp does not have the specific details for how it would work.

The rich, on the other hand, would benefit greatly under Cain's plan.

Another item that required fact-checking was Rick Perry's declaration that Mitt Romney has knowingly hired illegal immigrants.

During the debate, Perry said to Romney, "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."

To that, Romney replied, "I don't think I've ever hired an illegal in my life."

As it turns out, Romney has not actually hired an illegal alien knowingly, but did utilize a landscaping company that employed illegal immigrants from Guatemala, as reported by the *Boston Globe* in December 2006. When Romney prepared for his 2008 presidential run, accusations that Romney hired illegal immigrants were addressed by the Romney camp, and the illegal immigrant in question was terminated. However, Romney continued to utilize the same landscaping company, which continued to hire illegal immigrants.

At the time, the Romney campaign indicated that there was only so much that an individual could do to ensure that they are hiring citizens when utilizing a legitimate company.

Another accusation that was flung by one of the GOP candidates on stage yesterday involved Rick Perry and his alleged support for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). According to former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, Rick Perry supported TARP, an assertion that Perry adamantly denied.

RICK SANTORUM: "(Perry) 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."

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."

Perhaps the reason for the conflicting characterizations is that Perry gave indications in 2008 that he both supported and opposed the plan.

When Perry served as the chairman for the Republican Governors Association, he co-wrote a letter with his Democratic colleague that appeared to call on Congress to pass TARP. The letter was addressed on October 1 immediately following the House's initial rejection of the bill and read, "We strongly urge



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Congress to leave partisanship at the door and pass an economic recovery package.

The very next day, however, Perry told the *Dallas Morning News* that he favored an economic plan that was in favor of taxpayers, and that “in a free-market economy, government should not be in the business of using taxpayer dollars to bail out corporate America.” TARP was the plan that was voted on, as Santorum said, but it also was a bailout for corporate American, which Perry told the *Dallas Morning News* he did not support.

Of course, all of the candidates who participated in the debate Tuesday night portray themselves as fiscally conservative — but what *specific* spending cuts do they support? For example, do they support ending the U.S. foreign aid program? Interestingly, when the candidates were asked that question during the debate, only one — Congressman Ron Paul — said he supports ending foreign aid. [Paul released a plan](#) the day before the debate that shows where he would cut, how much, and what the total package of cuts adds up to be — nearly \$1 trillion during the first year. Voters may agree or disagree with what Paul wants to cut and to what extent, but at least they know what he is proposing. The other candidates, though, are much more vague as to exactly how they would rein in runaway federal spending while keeping spending programs such as foreign aid.

Clearly, the American people should be vigilant — including checking the public records of candidates and applying common sense — when candidates boast about what they will do or attack their competitors.

Photo of Herman Cain: AP Images



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