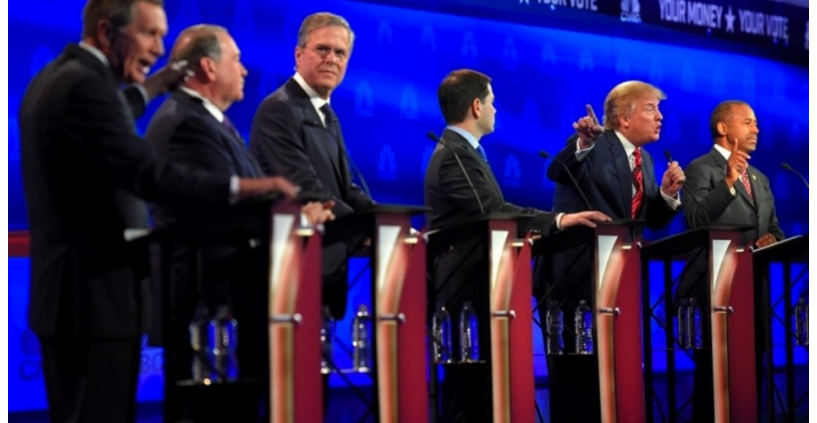




Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 29, 2015

## Republican Debate: Rubio, Cruz, Trump Rocked; CNBC Got Mocked

John Harwood, one of the trio of CNBC moderators of the third Republican debate held Wednesday night in Boulder, Colorado, set in motion the evening's tone and tenor with [this condescending question](#) of Donald Trump:



Mr. Trump, you've done very well in this campaign so far by promising to build a wall and make another country pay for it, send 11 million people out of the country, cut taxes by \$10 trillion without increasing the deficit, and make Americans better off because your greatness would replace the stupidity and incompetence of others. Let's be honest: Is this a comic-book version of a presidential campaign?

After listening to Trump's answer, Harwood added fuel to the fire: "I have talked to economic advisors who have served presidents of both parties. They said that you have as much chance of cutting taxes that much without increasing the deficit as you would have flying away from that podium by flapping your wings."

After listening to a series of similar inane and insulting questions by the panel, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) had had enough:

The questions that have been asked so far in this debate illustrate why the American people don't trust the media. This is not a cage match. Look at the questions: Donald Trump, are you a comic book villain? Ben Carson, can you do math? John Kasich, will you insult two people over there? Marco Rubio, why don't you resign? Jeb Bush, why have your numbers fallen? How about talking about the substantive issues people care about?

The partisan audience roared its approval that briefly delayed the proceedings.

Another highlight moment occurred when Jeb Bush, trying to shed his "nice guy" persona, accused Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) of spending so much time on the campaign trail that he was missing votes in the Senate:

I'm a constituent of the senator, and I helped him, and I expected that he would do constituent service, which means that he shows up to work. He got endorsed by [Florida's] *Sun-Sentinel* because he was the most talented guy in the field. He's a gifted politician.

But Marco, when you signed up for this, this was a six-year term, and you should be showing up to work [in the Senate]. I mean, literally, the Senate ... what is it, like a French work week? You get like three days where you have to show up? Let someone else take the job. There are a lot of people



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living paycheck to paycheck in Florida. They're looking for a senator who will fight for them each and every day.

When Rubio attempted to respond, Jeb interjected. Rubio then cut him off: "No, Jeb ... Let me tell you, I don't remember you ever complaining about John McCain's voting record [when he was running for office]. The only reason you're doing it now is because we're running for the same position and someone has convinced you that attacking me is going to help you."

Rubio then finished the conversation that kept Bush silent for nearly 30 minutes:

Here's the bottom line ... My campaign is going to be about the future of America. It's not going to be about attacking someone else on this stage. I will continue to have tremendous admiration and respect for Governor Bush. I'm not running against Governor Bush. I'm not running against anyone on this stage. I'm running for president because there is no way we can elect Hillary Clinton to continue the policies of Barack Obama!

Moments later, Rubio, in an obvious reference to the three moderators from CNBC, said the mainstream media constitute Hillary Clinton's "ultimate super PAC," generating more applause from the partisan audience.

When it was all over, Republican National Committee (RNC) Chairman Reince Priebus blasted CNBC for asking "gotcha" questions, and said that the moderators "should be ashamed," adding, "I was very disappointed in the moderators. I'm disappointed in CNBC. I thought they would bring forward a pretty fair forum here tonight. But I think it was one 'gotcha' question, one personal low blow after another."

It was Senator Cruz's night. Not only did he light up the audience with his calling out of the CNBC moderators, his response lit up Facebook. Social media "mentions" went sky high, according to pollster Frank Luntz: "Ted Cruz's focus group dials [hit] 98 with his attack on media bias. That's the highest score we've ever measured. EVER."

It was also Cruz's day. The Wednesday morning edition of the *Wall Street Journal* featured Cruz's touting of his Flat Tax plan that would cut every taxpayer's tax rate to 10 percent (after charitable and mortgage interest deductions), and the corporate tax rate to 16 percent. This would, according to the Tax Foundation's analysis of his plan, boost the economy, add millions of jobs and increase after-tax wages. According to Cruz, "every income group would get a double-digit wage increase" while allowing "every American [to file] his or her taxes on a postcard or an iPhone app. And abolishing the IRS as we know it."

This showed up in the Drudge Poll taken immediately after the debate. While Trump remained in the lead with 55 percent, Rubio held on to 10 percent while Cruz sprinted to 21 percent.

How well CNBC polled wasn't measured.

*Photo: AP Images*

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