

Republican Debate Transcript, Charleston, South Carolina, January 2012

Speakers: Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, [Mitt Romney](#) and Rick Santorum

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This debate between Republican candidates was held in Charleston, South Carolina on January 19, 2012. It was sponsored by CNN and moderated by CNN's John King. Participants were Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, Mitt Romney, and Rick Santorum. This transcript was provided by the Chicago Sun Times.

JOHN KING: I want to ask the candidates to get comfortable at their podiums, have our audience take their seats while I tell you a bit about how tonight's debate will work. I'll ask questions, as will some members of our audience tonight. I'll follow up and guide the discussion.

Candidates, I promise you, we're going to try to make sure each of you gets your fair share of the time and the questions. You'll have one minute to answer and 30 seconds for follow-ups and rebuttals, and I'll make sure you get time to respond if you are singled out for criticism.

Now let's have the candidates introduce themselves. We're going to ask them to keep it short, and here's an example. I'm John King from CNN. I'm rooting for the Patriots this weekend -- (cheers) -- and I'm honored to be your moderator this evening.

Senator Santorum, let's begin with you.

RICK SANTORUM: I'm Rick Santorum, and I want to thank the people of the Low Country for their hospitality to my wife, Karen, and our seven Children. And I also want to thank the people of Iowa for a little delayed but most welcome victory there. Thank you to the people of Iowa. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Governor.

MITT ROMNEY: I'm Mitt Romney. It's good to be back in South Carolina, see many good friends here. It's also great to be here with my wife and some of my kids. I'm married now 42 years. I have five sons, five daughters-in-law, 16 grandkids, and they're the joy of my life. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker.

NEWT GINGRICH: I'm Newt Gingrich. I want to thank the people of South Carolina for being so

hospitable. As a Georgian, it feels good to be back at home in the South, and I look forward to this evening. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Congressman Paul.

REPRESENTATIVE RON PAUL (R-TX): Thank you very much. It's great to be here tonight.

I am a congressman from Texas. I've been elected for -- 12 times. And also I practiced OB-GYN for a 30-year period. I've also served five years in the military and I'm only -- I'm the only U.S. veteran on this stage tonight. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: You've met the candidates. It's time now to begin the debate, an even that has quite a dramatically different feel than just a few hours ago.

Just this morning, as Senator Santorum just noted, we learned he, not Governor Romney, won the Iowa caucuses. (Cheers, applause.)

There were five podiums on this stage when the sun came up; four now because of Governor Rick Perry's decision to drop out.

Just as Speaker Gingrich surged into contention here in South Carolina, a direct, fresh character attack on the speaker. And Mr. Speaker, I want to start with that this evening.

As you know, your ex-wife gave an interview to ABC News and another interview with The Washington Post, and this story has now gone viral on the Internet. In it, she says that you came to her in 1999, at a time when you were having an affair. She says you asked her, sir, to enter into an open marriage. Would you like to take some time to respond to that?

MR. GINGRICH: No -- but I will. (Cheers, applause.)

I think -- I think the destructive, vicious, negative nature of much of the news media makes it harder to govern this country, harder to attract decent people to run for public office. And I am appalled that you would begin a presidential debate on a topic like that. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Is that all you want to say, sir?

MR. GINGRICH: Let me finish.

MR. KING: Please. (Boos, cheers, applause.)

MR. GINGRICH: Every person in here knows personal pain.

Every person in here has had someone close to them go through painful things. To take an ex-wife and make it two days before the primary a significant question in a presidential campaign is as close to despicable as anything I can imagine. (Cheers, applause.)

My -- my two daughters, my two daughters wrote the head of ABC, and made the point that it was wrong, that they should pull it. And I am frankly astounded that CNN would take trash like that and use it to open a presidential debate. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: As you noted, Mr. Speaker, this story did not come from our network. As you also know, it is a subject of conversation on the campaign. I'm not -- I get your point; I take get your --

MR. GINGRICH: John, John, it was repeated by your network. (Boos.) You chose to start the debate with it. Don't try to blame somebody else. You and your staff chose to start this debate with that. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Now, OK --

MR. GINGRICH: Now, let me be quite clear. Let me be quite clear. The story is false. Every personal friend I have who knew us in that period says the story was false. We offered several of them to ABC to prove it was false. They weren't interested, because they would like to attack any Republican. They're attacking the governor, they're attacking me. I'm sure they'll probably get around to Senator Santorum and Congressman Paul. I am tired of the elite media protecting Barack Obama by attacking Republicans. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: All right. As I noted -- as I noted at the beginning, we have four podiums on this stage tonight, not five.

And when he exited the race this morning, Governor Perry quickly and forcefully endorsed Speaker Gingrich. And in that remark, he said that, no, Mr. Gingrich is not a perfect man. Senator Santorum, he said none of us are. And he said he believes in his Christian faith that guides him to the value of redemption. Speaker Gingrich doesn't believe this is an issue; Governor Perry says this is not an issue. I just want to start with you, sir, and go down. Do you believe it is?

RICK SANTORUM: I've answered this question repeatedly throughout the course of this campaign. I am a Christian, too, and I thank God for forgiveness. But, you know, these -- these are issues of our lives, and what we did in our lives are issues of character for people to consider. But the bottom line is, those are -- those are things for everyone in this audience to look at, and they're to look at me, look at what I've done in my private life and personal life, unfortunately.

And what I say is that this country is a very forgiving country. This -- this country understands that we are all fallen. And I'm very hopeful that we will be judged by that standard and not by -- by a higher one on the ultimate day. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Governor Romney?

MITT ROMNEY: John, let's get on to the real issues, is all I've got to say. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Congressman?

REPRESENTATIVE RON PAUL (R-TX): I think too often all of us are on the receiving ends of attacks from the media, and it's very disturbing, because sometimes they're not based on facts and we suffer the consequences. You know, sometimes it reminds me of this idea of getting corporations out of running campaigns -- (chuckles) -- but what about the corporations that run the media? (Cheers, applause.) I mean, they're always (in politics ?).

And I think -- I think -- I think our responsibility is sorting facts and fiction. The people have to sort this out. But I think setting standards are very important, and I'm very proud that my wife of 54 years is with me tonight.

(Applause.)

MR. KING: As I said at the top of the debate -- as I said at the top of the debate, we'll take some questions from the audience. We've reached out to people online. We've also reached out to a number of voters, some who wish they could be here tonight but can't be here tonight.

I want to turn to a question from one of those voters. Her name is Jane Gallagher (sp). She's from here in South Carolina. As all of you know and as everyone in this audience from South Carolina knows, we're in a state with 9.9 percent unemployment.

And Jane asks this question: List three or more specific programs that will put American people back to work.

Congressman Paul, I want to begin with you. Do you believe we need specific federal programs to put the American people back to work?

REP. PAUL: Well, most of the things the federal government could do to get us back to work is get out of the way.

I'd like to see -- (cheers, applause) -- I'd like to see the federal government have a sound currency. That creates a healthy economy. (Applause.) I would like to see massive reduction of regulations. I would like to see income tax reduced as to near zero as possible.

And that is what we have to do. We have to get the government out of the way. We have to recognize why we have unemployment. And it comes because we have a deeply flawed financial system that causes financial bubbles, the bubbles burst and you have the unemployment.

Now, the most important thing to get over that hump that was created artificially by bad economic policy is to allow the correction to occur. You have to get rid of the excessive debt and you have to get rid of the mal-investment. And you don't do that by buying the debt off the people who -- who were benefiting from it.

So we the people shouldn't be stuck with -- stuck with these debts on these mortgage derivatives and all. We need to get that behind us, which means the government shouldn't be doing any bailouts.

So most of the things to improve the environment is getting the government out of the way and enforce contract laws and enforce bankruptcy laws. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, come in on that point and -- (inaudible) -- address what you would like to do, but also specifically the question, do we need federal programs?

MR. GINGRICH: Well, there are three things that can be done at a specifically South Carolina level. There's one easy thing to do at a national level, and that's repeal the Dodd-Frank bill, which is killing small business, killing small banks. That would help overnight. (Applause.)

The three specifics.

One, there \$29 billion plus of natural gas offshore. In Louisiana, jobs for that kind of production are \$80,000 a year. That would help us become energy independent from the Middle East.

Part of the royalties from the natural gas could be used, then, to modernize the Port of Charleston and the Port of Georgetown. Charleston has to be modernized to meet the larger ships that'll come through the Panama Canal in 2014. One out of every five jobs in South Carolina is dependent on the Port of Charleston.

The third thing you could do, frankly, is fundamentally, radically overhaul the Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers today takes eight years to study -- not to complete -- to study doing the port. We won the entire Second World War in three years and eight months. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: OK. A subset of the jobs conversation among the candidates in this state over the past week, Mr. Speaker, has been from you and from the now-departed Governor Perry pretty sharp criticism of Governor Romney's tenure as the CEO of Bain Capital. I want you to be specific: What do you think he did wrong that --

MR. GINGRICH: No --

MR. KING: -- makes you question his ability as a president to create jobs?

MR. GINGRICH: I think there are specific cases -- Georgetown Steel would be a case here, a company in Gaffney, South Carolina -- but specific cases where Bain Capital's model -- which was to take over a company and dramatically leverage it, leave it with a great deal of debt -- made it less likely to survive. I think the governor ought to explain -- because it started because he cited his experience as a key part of his preparation for being president. And so I think the underlying model of that kind of investment, which is very different from venture capital, ought to be explained and those cases ought to be looked at.

MR. KING: Well, Governor Romney, let me give you a chance. Explain.

MR. ROMNEY: Well, I hope I get a chance to talk about the topic you began with.

MR. KING: We'll --

MR. ROMNEY: We'll come back to the -- (chuckling) -- the direct attack from Speaker Gingrich in a moment.

MR. KING: Sure.

MR. ROMNEY: So let's go back and talk about, first, what you do to get the economy going. And -- and of course we've spoken time and again about our tax code that's out of alignment with other nations. We've spoken about the fact that regulation is overwhelming us, that we need to take care of our energy resources and become energy-secure. We have to open up markets, and we have to crack down on China when they cheat.

But -- but I'd like to talk about something else that President Obama has been doing. He's been practicing crony capitalism. And if you want to get America going again -- (applause) -- you've got to stop the spread of crony capitalism. He gives General Motors to the UAW. He takes \$500 million and sticks it into Solyndra. He -- he stacks the labor stooges on the NLRB, so they can say no to Boeing and take care of their friends in the labor movement. (Applause.)

You go across the country -- with regards to energy, because he has to bow to the most extreme members of the environmental movement, he turns down the Keystone pipeline, which would bring energy and jobs to America. (Applause, boos.) This -- this -- this president is biggest impediment to job growth in this country, and we have to replace Barack Obama to get America working again. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Huh. So let's go back -- I'm glad you had that opportunity. I do want to go back, see if we can clear this up. The questions about Bain -- many have been about the number. You have said 120,000 jobs that you can tie back to decisions you made at Bain Capital. I want you to take your time, sir, and do the math. Do the math in how you get to 100(,000) or 120,000 jobs.

MR. ROMNEY: I'll -- I'll do the math, but let me tell you, I know we're going to get attacked from the left, from Barack Obama, on capitalism. I know that people are going to say, oh, you should only practice it this way or that way, and think they know better than the private market. My view is, capitalism works. Free enterprise works. (Cheers, applause.) And I -- and -- and I find it -- I find it kind of strange, on a stage like this, with Republicans, having to describe how private equity and venture capital work and how they're successful -- (applause) -- and how they create jobs. But let me -- let me tell you that answer.

We started a number of businesses; four in particular created 120,000 jobs, as of today. We started them years ago. They've grown -- grown well beyond the time I was there to 120,000 people that have been employed by those enterprises.

There are others we've been with, some of which have lost jobs. People have evaluated that since -- well, since I ran four years ago, when I ran for governor. And those that have been documented to have lost jobs, lost about 10,000 jobs. So 220,000 less 10(,000) means that we created something over a hundred thousand jobs. And there's some of them, by the way, that -- that were businesses we acquired that grew and became more successful, like Domino's Pizza and a company called Duane Reade and others.

I'm very proud of the fact that throughout my career, I have worked to try and build enterprises -- hopefully to return money to investors. There's nothing wrong with profit, by the way. That profit -- (cheers, applause) -- that profit -- that profit -- that profit went to pension funds, to charities; it went to a wide array of institutions. A lot of people benefited from that.

And by the way, as enterprises become more profitable, they can hire more people. I'm -- I'm someone who believes in free enterprise. I think Adam Smith was right, and I'm going to stand and defend capitalism across this country, throughout this campaign. I know we're going to hit it hard from President Obama, but we're going to stuff it down his throat and point out it is capitalism and freedom that makes America strong. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Senator Santorum, join the conversation. Specifically to the initial question from Jane, what should the federal government be doing? And do you believe in specific programs? And I also want to ask you if you share the speaker's concern about Governor Romney's tenure at Bain.

MR. SANTORUM: Well, on the first question, I believe in capitalism, too. I believe in capitalism for everybody, not necessarily high finance but capitalism that works for the working men and women of this country who are out there paddling alone in America right now -- (applause) -- who have an unemployment rate two and a half times those who are college-educated, and feel that no party cares about them. Because you have the Democratic Party and Barack Obama, and all he wants to do is make them more dependent, give them more food stamps, give them more Medicaid.

I was -- I was talking to a state official the other day that -- in Iowa that told me that the state of Iowa is being fined because they're not signing up enough people onto the Medicaid program. This is the -- this is what the answer is for the economic squalor that Barack Obama has visited on working men and women in this country, and it's creating more government programs and getting them more dependent on those programs.

We need a party that just doesn't talk about high finance and -- and cutting corporate taxes or cutting the top tax rates. We need to talk about how we're going to put men and women in this country who built this country back to work in this country in the manufacturing sector of our economy. (Cheers, applause.)

And -- (applause) -- and there's one candidate that -- that -- that has done that. I have done that. I've done that throughout the course of this campaign. I talked about who we were going to target and make sure that we can be competitive.

I was in Boeing today and I was up in BMW yesterday. South Carolina can compete with anybody in this world in manufacturing. (Cheers, applause.) We just need to give them the opportunity to compete. And we are 20 percent more costly than our top nine trading partners, and that's excluding labor costs. That's why I say we need to cut the corporate tax in manufacturing down to zero. We need to give manufacturers a leg up so they can compete for the jobs, half of which -- we went from 21 percent of this country in manufacturing down to 9 (percent) and we left the dreams of working men and women on the sideline. We need to show that we're the party, we're the movement that's going to get those Reagan Democrats, those conservative Democrats all throughout the states that we need to win to win this election to sign up

with us, and we'll put them back to work. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Let's stay on the economy and let's stay on the South Carolina experience all you gentlemen have had. As you know and as this audience reflects, this is a state incredibly proud of its military tradition and incredibly proud of its veterans. (Applause.)

Many of those veterans, who have served post-9/11, served honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan, are coming back to a terrible economy. Right now, unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans aged 18 to 24 is at 22 percent.

Congressman Paul, to you first, sir. Should the federal government be specifically targeting that part, our veterans coming back, saying the unemployment rate is so high among that subgroup that the federal government should offer a tax incentive to employers, or take other steps to help them, to incentivize the economy to help them get jobs?

REP. PAUL: Well, to some degree, but you really want to make the environment -- the economy healthy for everybody, and not designate special places. But to help them out to come back is probably necessary on some occasions now.

But we have to think about how serious our problems are here, because we faced something much, much greater after World War II. We had 10 million come home, all at once. We -- but what did we do then? There were some of the liberals back then that said: Oh, we have to have more work programs, and do this and that. And they thought they would have to, you know, do everything conceivable for those 10 million. They never got around to it, because they came home so quickly.

But you know what the government did? They cut the budget by 60 percent. They cut taxes by 30 percent. By that time, the debt had been liquidated, and everybody went back to work again and you didn't need any special programs. (Cheers, applause.)

So -- but the one thing -- talking about the concern about the military and the veterans, I'm very proud that, you know, I get twice as many donations from the military -- active military people, than all the rest put together. (Cheers, applause.) So I am very concerned about them.

I think where the real problem is, is we can create a healthy economic environment if we did the right things. But where the veterans really deserve help, both as a physician and as a congressman, is the people who've come back and aren't doing well health-wise. They need a lot more help.

We have an epidemic now of suicide of our military coming back. So they need a lot of medical help, and I think they come up shortchanged. They came up shortchanged after Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, and even now. They don't get care from the Veterans Administration. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: I think we all agree there's a generational challenge for the country with the brain injuries and the other injuries and the suicide, as you mentioned. I want to stay on the economy for a minute, though.

Senator Santorum, you started to shake your head. Again, specifically it's a role-of-government question.

Should the question be stepping in and saying we need to help this subgroup in the economy that's hurting, the veterans?

MR. SANTORUM: Well, obviously we have and should continue to have veterans' preferences. People who went out and served this country should have -- should have preferences when it comes to job positions when they come back to work in this economy.

But my dad and mom worked for the Veterans Administration. I grew up on VA grounds, lived in an apartment in those -- on those VA grounds for the first 18 years of my life. And I saw the impact of the Vietnam War on those veterans who came back. And they came back very damaged, not just with physical wounds but a lot of psychological (wounds/ones ?). And that's, I'm sure, a very big part of the high unemployment rate that we're dealing with.

And we need to be much, much more aggressive. We have a president of the United States who said he is going to cut veterans' benefits, cut our military, at a time when these folks are -- four, five, six, seven tours, coming back, in and out of jobs, sacrificing everything for this country, and the president of the United States can't cut one penny out of the social welfare system and he wants to cut a trillion dollars out of our military and hit our veterans. And that's disgusting. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Governor, and then Mr. Speaker, Senator Santorum passionately makes the case. It also is a time, as all of you know, of very tough budget decisions the next president's going to have to make, setting priorities. How do you do it? How -- what specifically do you do to help the veterans?

MR. ROMNEY: Well, let's distinguish between what gets done at the federal level and what gets done at the state level.

In our state we found a way to help our -- our veterans by saying, look, if you're going to come back, particularly if you're in the National Guard, we'll pay for your education, college degree, both the fees and tuition -- we'd give you a full ride. And we also had a plan that said, if you come back and you've been out of work for a year or more, we're going to put a -- like a bonus on your back, which, if anyone hires you, that bonus goes to them to pay for your training. So we can encourage that to occur.

But let's do it at the state level. Let's not have the federal government continue to extend its -- its tentacles into everything that goes on in this country. Let's let the -- (applause) -- let's take the -- let's take the money that's -- that -- that we use to help people who have real needs, and instead of having it all administered by the federal government that thinks they know how to do everything, let's take that money, bundle up South Carolina's fair share and every other state's fair share, send it to them and say, you care for your people in the way you feel best. Let's do that at the state level.

And I agree with what -- what Senator Santorum said with regards to our military budget. Right now for the president to be cutting \$350,000 from our military budget, planning to cut another \$650,000 -- \$650 billion, excuse me -- 350 billion (dollars), another 650 billion (dollars) -- a trillion dollars -- his secretary of defense says that represents a doomsday scenario. We've got an aging Navy. We've got an aging Air Force. They're planning on cutting our number of active-duty personnel. They can't possibly keep up with

the needs of our veterans. It is absolutely wrong to balance our budget on the backs of our military. We need a strong military -- so strong no one in the world would ever think of testing it. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, please come in. We're going to have -- we'll have some conversations about commander in chief. You have the floor now: specifically, veterans who need jobs.

MR. GINGRICH: Yeah, let me just say two things about Congressman Paul's history.

The U.S. government did two dramatic things after World War II. They created a GI Bill which enabled literally millions of returning veterans to go to college for the very first time. My father, when -- who was in the Second World War, went to college on a GI Bill.

So there was an enormous expansion of opportunity that enabled them to integrate into a new, emerging society.

The second thing they did is, they dramatically cut taxes, and the economy took off and grew dramatically, and it absorbed the workforce.

So I would say we ought to both have a transition process for veterans to enable them to have a real advantage in getting a job when they come home, and we ought to have a very aggressive economic program of regulatory cuts and tax cuts in American energy, so that the entire population is absorbed by getting back to about 4 percent unemployment, in which case virtually every veteran would have a very good job at the end of the transition period. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Let's turn to our audience now.

MR. : Please.

MR. KING: Let's turn now and take a question from down in our audience tonight. Go ahead, sir.

Q: My name is Sonny Coane. I'm from Sevier County, Tennessee. My question to any of the candidates is, do any of you sincerely believe that "Obamacare" can either be repealed or reversed in its entirety?

MR. GINGRICH: Sure. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Let me -- let me go first to Governor Romney on that one. Governor, you have said you would do it on day one, with an executive order that would free the states up to opt out -- waivers, essentially, to get out of that program. I know your friend the South Carolina governor might like to have that option.

Help me understand, as you do that, how would it play out? And what happens to those -- someone with a pre-existing condition, for example -- who now has coverage under the president's health care plan, or a young American, 22, 23, 24, who, because of the changes in the law, can now stay a few extra years on their parents' health care? What happens to them when you sign that executive order?

MR. ROMNEY: Well, first of all, the executive order is a beginning process. It's one thing, but it doesn't completely eliminate "Obamacare." It's one thing I want to get done, to make sure that states can take

action to pull out of "Obamacare."

But number two, we have to go after a complete repeal. (Cheers, applause.) And that's going to have to have to happen -- that -- that's going to have to happen with -- with a House and a Senate, hopefully that are Republican. If we don't have a Republican majority, I think we're going to be able to convince some Democrats that when the American people stand up loud and clear and say, we do not want "Obamacare," we do not want the higher taxes, we do not want a \$500 billion cut in Medicare to pay for "Obamacare," I think you're going to see the American people stand with our president and say, let's get rid of "Obamacare."

But we'll replace it. And I've -- and I've laid out what I'll replace it with. First, it's a bill that does care for people that have pre-existing conditions. If they've got a pre-existing condition and they've been previously insured, they won't be denied insurance going forward.

Secondly, I'll allow people to own their own insurance rather than just be able to get it from their employer. I want people to be able to take their insurance with them if they go from job to job. (Applause.) So -- so we'll make it work in the way that's designed to have health care act like a market, a consumer market, as opposed to have it run like Amtrak and the Post Office. That's what's at risk -- (applause) -- at stake here.

Do we -- we go back to this. Ours is the party of free enterprise, freedom, markets, consumer choice. Theirs is the party of government knowledge, government domination, where Barack Obama believes that he knows better for the American people what's best for them. He's wrong. We're right. That's why we're going to win. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, you heard the skepticism. It's a Southern Republican voter. But he's skeptical, and he knows how Washington works.

MR. GINGRICH: Well, sure.

MR. KING: He's watched Washington work. He's asked: Can it be reversed in its entirety. You -- you were the speaker of the House. You understand how this works. How? How can it be repealed in this current political environment?

MR. GINGRICH: Well, let me say, first of all, if you've watched Washington and you're not skeptical, you haven't learned anything. (Laughter, applause.) I mean, this -- this system is a total mess right now.

Second, can you get it repealed in total? Sure. You have to elect a House, a Senate and a president committed to that. It has to be a major part of the fall campaign. And I think that, frankly, on our side with any of us, it's going to be a major part of the fall campaign. The American people are frightened of bureaucratic centralized medicine, they deeply distrust Washington, and the pressure will be to repeal it.

And a lot of what Governor Romney has said I think is actually pretty good, sound stuff for part of the replacement. I would always repeal all of it, because I so deeply distrust the congressional staffs that I would not want them to be able to pick and choose which things they kept.

But let me make one observation. You raised a good example. Why is President Obama for young people being allowed to stay on their parents' insurance until 26? Because he can't get any jobs for them to go out and buy their own insurance. (Cheers, applause.)

I mean, I -- I have an -- I have an offer -- I have an offer to the parents of America: Elect us, and your kids will be able to move out, because they'll have work. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: (Laughs.) Let's -- (inaudible) -- Senator Santorum, you heard Governor Romney and you heard Speaker Gingrich. Do you trust them, if one of them is the Republican Party's nominee, and potentially the next president of the United States, to repeal this law?

MR. SANTORUM: The biggest -- the biggest thing we have to do is elect a president. I think Newt's right. The problem is that two of the people up here would be very difficult to elect on, I think, the most important issue that this country is dealing with right now, which is the robbing of our freedom because of "Obamacare."

Governor Romney tells a very nice story about what his plan is now. It wasn't his plan when he was in a position to do a plan. When he was governor of Massachusetts, he put forth "Romneycare," which was not a bottom-up, free-market system. It was a government-run health care system that was the basis of "Obamacare." And it has been an abject failure, and he has stood by it.

He's stood by the fact that it's \$8 billion more expensive -- (applause) -- than under the current law. He's stood by the fact that Massachusetts has the highest health insurance premiums of any state in the country; it is 27 percent more expensive than the average state in the country. Doctors -- if you're in the Massachusetts health care system, over 50 percent of the doctors now are not seeing new patients -- primary care doctors are not seeing new patients. Those who do get to see a patient are waiting 44 days, on average, for the care.

It is an abject disaster.

He's standing by it, and he's going to have to have to run against a president -- he's going to have to run against a president who's going to say, well, look, look at what you did for Massachusetts, and you're the one criticizing me for what I've done? I used your model for it.

And then -- (cheers, applause) -- then we have Speaker Gingrich, who has been for an individual mandate, not back in the time that just was -- Heritage was floating around in the '90s, but as late as -- comments (since/in ?) 2008, just a few years ago, he stood up and said that we should have an individual mandate or post a \$150,000 bond. How many \$150,000 bondholders do we have here who can post a bond for their health insurance?

These are two folks who don't present the clear contrast that I do, who was the author of health savings accounts, which is the primary basis of every single -- (cheers, applause) -- conservative reform of health care. I was the author of it back in 1991 and '92, 20 years ago. I've been fighting for health reform, private-

sector, bottom-up, the way America works best, for 20 years, while these two guys were playing footsies with the left. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: I want to bring Congressman Paul -- I'll bring him into the discussion in just a moment, but Senator Santorum directly challenged the governor and then the speaker. Governor, you first.

MR. ROMNEY: Well, so much of what the senator said was wrong. Let me mention a few of the things.

First of all, the system in my state is not a government-run system. Ninety-eight -- 92 percent of the people had their own insurance before the system was put in place, and nothing changed for them. They still had the same private insurance. And the 8 percent of the uninsured, they bought private insurance, not government insurance. And the people in the state still favor the plan three to one.

And it certainly doesn't work perfectly. Massachusetts, by the way, had the highest insurance costs before the plan was put in place and after, but fortunately, the rate of growth has slowed down a little less than the overall nation. And one of the things I was proud of is that individuals who wanted to buy their own insurance saw their rates -- when they were not part of a big group -- saw their rates drop by some 40 percent with our plan.

Is it perfect? Absolutely not. But I do believe that having been there, having been on the front lines, showing that I have compassion for people that don't have insurance but that the Obama plan is a 2,700-page, massive tax increase, Medicare-cutting monster, I know how to cut it. I'll eliminate it. I will repeal it and I'll return the -- I'll return the power to the states, where the power for caring for the uninsured ought to reside constitutionally. Thank you.

MR. SANTORUM: Yeah, I'd like --

MR. KING: Senator Santorum, he says your facts are wrong.

MR. SANTORUM: Well, they're simply not wrong. The fact is that, yes, you're right, Governor Romney, 92 percent of people did have health insurance in Massachusetts, but that wasn't private-sector health insurance. A lot of those people were, as you know, on Medicare and Medicaid, so they're already on government insurance, and you just expanded it, in fact. Over half the people who came on the rolls since you put "Romneycare" into effect are fully subsidized by the state of Massachusetts, and a lot of those are on the Medicaid program. So the idea that you have created this marketplace and -- and -- with this government-run health care system where you have very prescriptive programs about reimbursement rates, you have a very prescriptive program just like what President Obama is trying to put in place here, you're arguing for a plan -- you're defending a plan that is top-down. It is not a free-market health care system. It is not bottom-up. It is prescriptive in government. It was the basis for "Obamacare." And we do not draw a distinction that it's going to be effective for us just because it was the state level, not the federal level. (Applause.)

MR. ROMNEY: (Chuckles.)

MR. KING: If you want, Governor, quickly.

MR. ROMNEY: Sure, absolutely.

First of all, as you probably know, Medicaid is not a state program. All right?

MR. SANTORUM: Of course it is. It's a state and federal program.

MR. ROMNEY: Medicaid is as demanded by the federal government, and it is -- it's -- it is a mandate --

MR. SANTORUM: (Off mic.)

MR. ROMNEY: -- it's a mandate by the federal government and it's shared 50/50 state and federal. The people of Massachusetts who are on Medicaid, I would like to end that program at the federal level, take the Medicaid dollars and return them to the states, and allow states -- states to craft their own plans.

That would make the plan we had in Massachusetts a heck of a lot better. My view is, get the federal government out of Medicaid, get it out of health care, return it to the states. And if you want to go be governor of Massachusetts, fine. But I want to be president, and let states take responsibility for their own plan. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, it may seem like a while ago, Mr. Speaker, but Senator Santorum made the point, in his view, you don't have credibility on this.

MR. GINGRICH: No, what he -- what he said, which I found mildly amazing, was that he thought I would have a hard time debating Barack Obama over health care. Now, in fact, I -- as Republican whip, I led the charge against "Hillarycare" in the House. As speaker of the House, I helped preside over the conference which wrote into law his idea on health savings accounts. So I was delighted to help him get it to be law. (Applause.) And -- and the fact is, I helped found the Center for Health Transformation. I wrote a book called "Saving lives and Saving Money" in 2002. You can go to healthtransformation.net, and you will see hundreds of ideas -- none of which resemble Barack Obama's programs.

So I'd be quite happy to have a three-hour Lincoln-Douglas-style debate with Barack Obama. I'd let him use a teleprompter. I'll just rely on knowledge. We'll do fine. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Senator, you're -- I want to bring Congressman Paul in. You're shaking your head. Quickly.

MR. SANTORUM: The core of "Obamacare" is an individual mandate. It is what is being litigated in the Supreme Court right now. It is government top-down telling every business and every American what kind of health care that you will have. That is the problem with "Obamacare" at the core of it. And the speaker supported it repeatedly for a 10-year period. So when he goes and says, I can, you know, run rings around President Obama in a Lincoln-Douglas debate, you can't run rings around the fact, Newt, that you supported the primary core basis of what President Obama's put in place.

MR. GINGRICH: Look, just one -- one brief comment. One --

MR. KING: All right, quickly, Mr. Speaker. The Congressman is getting lonely down here. Let's go.

(Applause.)

MR. GINGRICH: Well, one -- just one brief comment. Of course you can. I can say, you know, I was wrong, and I figured it out; you were wrong, and you didn't. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. SANTORUM: You held that -- Newt -- Newt, you held that position for over 10 years. And, you know, it's not going to be the most attractive thing to go out there and say, you know, it took me 10 or 12 years to figure out I was wrong, when guys like Rick Santorum knew it was wrong from the beginning. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Congressman Paul, you have the floor. Do you trust these men to repeal "Obamacare"?

REP. PAUL: Thank you! (Laughter, applause.) I thought you were -- I thought maybe you were prejudiced against doctors and a doctor that practiced medicine in the military or something. (Cheers, applause.)

No, I want to address the question. The gentleman asked whether he thinks we can repeal "Obamacare." Theoretically, we can. The likelihood isn't all that good. We can diminish some of the effect. But I'm more concerned about a bigger picture of what's happening, and that is government involvement in medicine.

I -- I had the privilege of practicing medicine in the early '60s, before we had any government. It worked rather well, and there was nobody on the street suffering with no medical care. But Medicare and Medicaid came in and -- and -- and it just expanded. But even when we had the chance to cut back on it, when we had a Republican Congress and a Republican president, we -- we gave them prescription drug programs. Senator Santorum supported it. (Laughs.) You know, that's expanding the government! (Cheers, applause.) So -- so it's endless.

And the -- and most of them are bankrupt. Prescription drugs, they -- they're not going to be financed; Medicare is not financeable; Medicaid's in trouble. But nobody talks about where the money's going to come from.

Now, even in my budget proposal -- which is very, very tough, because I'm going to cut a trillion dollars the first year -- but I try to really -- (cheers, applause) -- even though these programs should have never started that a lot of people are dependent on, I want to try to protect the people who are dependent on -- on medical care.

Now, where does the money come? My suggestion is, look at some of the overseas spending that we don't need to be doing. (Cheers, applause.) We have -- we have troops in Korea since -- since the Korean War, in Japan since World War II, in Germany since World War -- those are subsidies to these countries. And we keep fighting these wars that don't need to be fought, they're undeclared, they never end. Newt pointed out, you know, World War II was won in less than four years; Afghanistan, we're there for 10 years. Nobody says, where does the money come? We could work our way out of here and take care of these people on -- with these medical needs, but we can't do it with the current philosophy of the government taking care of everybody forever on medical care, cradle to grave, and being the policeman of the world.

We will get rid of all this government program, unfortunately because we're going bankrupt and you're

going to have runaway inflation and our checks are going to bounce. And that's going to be a lot worse problem than we're facing tonight. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: All right. I'm going to ask all of our candidates to stand by, our audience as well. We have a couple breaks tonight. We're going to take one of them now.

One candidate on this stage suggested this week that two candidates should get out of the race. One of them listened. We'll get the reaction from the other coming up.

And also coming up, this is just in: While we've been on the air having this debate, Speaker Gingrich has released his tax returns. He's put them online. We'll ask him what's in them when we come back. (Cheers, applause.)

(Announcements.)

(Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: (Off mic) -- back to Charleston, South Carolina, and our Southern Republican presidential debate. Let's get back to questioning the four gentlemen who would like to be the Republican nominee for president and the next president of the United States.

Part of the political conversation during the crackling campaign in this great state this week -- Senator Santorum, Speaker Gingrich said he thought it would be preferable for the conservative movement if one candidate, in his view, had a direct campaign against Governor Romney. He suggested -- he didn't -- said it was up to you, but he suggested perhaps Governor Perry and Senator Santorum should get out of the race.

In suggesting that, he said this: You don't have, quote, "any of the knowledge for how to do something on this scale."

What do you say to that?

MR. SANTORUM: Grandiosity has never been a problem with Newt Gingrich. He -- he handles it very, very well. (Cheers, applause.) And that's really one of the issues here, folks. I mean, a month ago, he was saying that, oh, I'm -- it's inevitable that I'm going to win the election and it's -- I'm destined to do it.

I don't want a nominee that I have to worry about going out and looking at the paper the next day and figuring out what is he -- worrying about what he's going to say next.

And -- and that's what I think we're seeing here. (Applause.)

For him to suggest that someone who was tied for first, and eventually won, the Iowa caucuses and finished with twice as many votes as he did; and finished ahead of him in New Hampshire in spite of the fact that he spent an enormous amount more money in both those places, plus had the most important endorsement in the state, the Manchester Union Leader; and I was 10 points behind him a week before the

election and then finished ahead of him, so I was 2-and-0 coming into South Carolina -- and I should get out of the race -- these are -- these are not cogent thoughts.

I mean, and -- and -- and -- and let's just be honest. I mean -- (cheers, applause) -- I mean, Newt's a friend, I love him, but at times you just got to -- you know, sort of that, you know, worrisome moment that something's going to pop. And we can't afford that in a nominee. We need someone -- I'm not the most flamboyant and I don't get the biggest applause lines here, but I'm steady. I'm solid. I'm not going to go out and do things that you're going to worry about. I'm going to be out there and I'm going to make Barack Obama the issue in this campaign. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker take some time to respond. As you do so, what exactly did you mean, doesn't have any of the knowledge for how to do something on this scale?

MR. GINGRICH: Well, it's a very simple question: How big a scale of change do we want in Washington? I started working with Governor Reagan in 1974. I helped, with Jack Kemp and others, the development of supply-side economics in the late '70s. I participated in the '80s in an enormous project of economic growth, and with President Reagan's leadership, the American people created 16 million jobs. With President Reagan's leadership, the Soviet Union disappeared.

I came back -- I spent 16 years on a grandiose project called creating a Republican majority in the House. Sixteen years. And most of the Republican leaders in the House thought it was a joke.

And we created the first majority. We then worked for two solid years, reformed welfare; two out of three people went back to work or went to school. We got -- ultimately became the first reelected Republican majority since 1928. We then went on to cut taxes for the first time in 16 years, the largest capital gains tax cut in American history. In the four years I was speaker, the American people created 11 million new jobs. We balanced the budget for four consecutive years, the only time in your lifetime.

You're right: I think grandiose thoughts. This is a grandiose country of big people doing big things, and we need leadership prepared to take on big projects. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Quickly.

MR. SANTORUM: I will give Newt Gingrich his due on grandiose ideas and grandiose projects. I will not give him his -- his -- his -- his due on executing those projects, which is exactly what the president of the United States is supposed to do. Four years into his speakership, he was thrown out by the conservatives. There was a coup against him in '03.

I served with him. I was there. I knew what the problems were going on in the House of Representatives, and Newt Gingrich was leading this -- leading there. It was an idea a minute -- no discipline, no ability to be able to pull things together. I understand you're taking credit for the 1994 election, and you did have a lot plans. As you know, I worked with you on those, and we had meetings early in the morning on many -- many a week. And so we worked together on that.

But you also have to admit that this freshman congressman who wasn't supposed to win a race, came and

did something you never did, which is blew the lid off the biggest scandal to hit the Congress in 50 years. You knew about it for -- for 10 or 15 years because you told me you knew about it. And you did nothing, because you didn't have the courage to stand up to your own leadership, the Democratic speaker of the House, take to the floor of the Senate, demand the releasing of the checks that were being kited by members of Congress, risk your political career, risk your promotion within the ranks and do what was right for America -- and that had more or as much to do with the 1994 win as any plan that you put together. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, respond.

MR. GINGRICH: You know, campaigns are interesting experiences for all of us, and each of us writes a selective history that fits our interests. As a freshman in 1979, I moved to expel a member who was a convicted felon for the first time since 1917 against the wishes of our leadership. In the page scandal in the 1980s, I moved and threatened to expel them unless they were punished much more severely against the wishes of the leadership. In the late 1980s, I initiated charges against the speaker of the House, Jim Wright, at rather considerable risk for a back-bench member. In 1990, I opposed the president of the United States of my own party when he tried to raise taxes. I said I actually thought he meant "read my lips," and I led the fight against raising taxes against the wishes of my party's leadership.

I think long before Rick came to Congress I was busy being a rebel, creating the Conservative Opportunity Society, developing a plan to win a majority in the Congress. And if you talk to anybody who worked at the Congressional Campaign Committee from -- from December of 1978 on, for 16 years, I worked to help create the Republican Party nationally to become a majority. I worked to create GOPAC to train the majority. Those are just historic facts, even if they're inconvenient for Rick's campaign. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Governor Romney, you're raising your hand to come in the conversation. I want to let you in the conversation. But also, as I do, you put an ad on the air, paid by your campaign -- this is not one of the super PAC ads, your campaign -- calling the speaker an unreliable leader. Why?

MR. ROMNEY: Well, let -- let me go back and -- and address, first, the -- what you just heard. What you've listened to, in my view -- and the speaker's rendition of history going back to 1978 and his involvement in Washington -- is in my view a perfect example of why we need to send to Washington someone who has not lived in Washington, but someone who has lived -- (applause) -- in the real streets of America, working in the private sector, who's led a business, who started a business, who helped lead the Olympics, who helped lead a state.

We need to have someone outside Washington go to Washington. If we want people who spent their life and their career -- most of their career in Washington, we have three people on the stage who've -- well, I take that back. We got a doctor down here who spent most of his time in the -- in the surgical suite -- well, not surgery -- the birthing suite. And -- (laughter) -- but the -- (cheers, applause) -- I just -- I think America -- I think America has to make a choice as to whether we're going to send people who spent their life in Washington go represent our country or instead whether we're going to lead -- have someone who

goes who's been a leader in the private sector and knows how the real economy works at the grass-roots level.

Now you asked me a(n) entirely different question. What do you -- what's -- (laughter) --

MR. GINGRICH: Beats me. I don't know. Where are we at, John? (Laughter.)

MR. ROMNEY: Let's -- let's -- let me -- let me say -- let me say one -- one of the things I find amusing is listening -- is listening to how -- how much credit is taken in Washington for what goes on on Main Street. I -- I mean, Mr. Speaker, it was -- it was -- you talk about all the things you did with Ronald Reagan and -- and -- and the Reagan revolution and the jobs created during the Reagan years and so forth. I mean, I looked at the Reagan diary. You're mentioned once in Ronald Reagan's diary. And it's -- and in the diary, he says you had an idea in a meeting of -- of young congressmen, and it wasn't a very good idea, and he dismissed it. That -- that's the entire mention. And -- I mean, he mentions George Bush a hundred times. He even mentions my dad once.

So I -- I -- I -- there's a sense that Washington is pulling the strings in America. But you know what? The free people of America, pursuing their dreams and taking risk and going to school and working hard -- those are the people that make America strong, not Washington. (Cheers, America.)

MR. KING: Quickly respond, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GINGRICH: Yeah. Look, this is -- this is probably a fundamental difference in our background and our experience. Under Jimmy Carter, we had the wrong laws, the wrong regulations, the wrong leadership, and we killed jobs. We had inflation. We went to 10.8 percent unemployment.

Under Ronald Reagan, we had the right job -- the right laws, the right regulators, the right leadership. We created 16 million new jobs.

We then had two consecutive tax increases: one by a Republican; one by a Democrat. The economy stagnated. When I became speaker, we went back to the Ronald Reagan playbook: lower taxes; less regulation; more American energy. And 11 million jobs showed up.

Now, I do think government can kill jobs, and I do think government can create the environment where entrepreneurs create jobs. And the truth is, you did very well under the rules that we created to make it easier for entrepreneurs to go out and do things. You'd have been much poorer if Jimmy Carter had remained president. (Applause.)

MR. ROMNEY: Let -- let me just --

MR. KING: All right, go ahead, quickly.

MR. ROMNEY: Let me just tell you, Mr. Speaker, you were speaker four years.

MR. GINGRICH: Right.

MR. ROMNEY: I -- I was in business 25 years. (Applause.)

MR. GINGRICH: Right.

MR. ROMNEY: So you're not going to get credit for my 25 years, number one. (Applause.)

Number -- number two, I don't recall -- I don't recall a single day saying, "Oh, thank Heavens, Washington is there for me --" (laughter) "-- thank -- thank heavens." I -- I said, "Please get out of my way. Let me start a business and put Americans to work." (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: All right, let me -- let me get out of the way for a second, and go back out to our audience and take a question from an audience member.

Sir?

Q: John Marcoux (ph), from the great city of Charleston. (Cheers, applause.)

Gentlemen, when will you release your tax returns, specifically?

MR. GINGRICH: An hour ago. (Laughter.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker posted his online an hour ago. We note that.

Congressman Paul -- we'll come down the line. Congressman Paul, I want to start with you. We reached out to your campaign this week, and they said you would not release your tax returns. Why?

REP. PAUL: Well -- well, I hadn't thought it -- thought it through. I don't have an intention of doing it, but for a different reason. I'd probably be embarrassed to put my financial statement up against their incomes. (Laughs, laughter.) I don't want the embarrassment because I don't have a greater income. (Applause.)

MR. KING: (Laughs.)

REP. PAUL: Now, I mean, it may come to that, but right now, I have no intention of doing that. I think with our financial statements -- with congressional financial statements, I think you know more about me than I know about myself.

That's how my wife found out so much about what we were doing, you know, from my financial statements. (Laughter.)

No, we don't need -- I don't think people need that because nobody's challenging me because I have no conflict of interest and I don't even talk to lobbyists and -- and I don't take that kind of money. So there's no conflict. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: All right. Governor Romney, when will we see yours?

MR. ROMNEY: When my taxes are complete for this year. And I know that if I'm the nominee the president's going to want to insist that I show what my income was this last year and so forth. When

they're completed this year in April I'll release my returns in April, and probably for other years as well.

And I know that's what's going to come. Every time the Democrats are out there trying their very best to -- to try and attack people because they've been successful, and I -- and I have been successful. But let me tell you, the -- the -- the challenge in America is not people who have been successful. The challenge in America -- and President Obama doesn't want to talk about this -- is you got a president who's played 90 rounds of golf while there are 25 million Americans out of work. And -- and -- (cheers, applause) -- and you've got -- and -- and while the price of gasoline has doubled, he said no to the Keystone pipeline. And while we've got 15 trillion (dollars) of debt, he said, look, I'm going to put another trillion of debt for "Obamacare." That's the problem in America, not the attacks they make on people who have been successful.

MR. KING: But some of the questions about when you'll release your taxes have not come -- the president has raised them -- his campaign has raised them, you're right on that. But so have some of your rivals up here. Speaker Gingrich has said you owe them to the people of South Carolina before they vote. Governor Perry made that point as well before he left the race. Why not should the people of South Carolina before this election see last year's return? (Cheers, applause.)

MR. ROMNEY: Because I want to make sure that I beat President Obama. And every time we release things drip by drip, the Democrats go out with another array of attacks. As -- as has been done in the past, if I'm the nominee, I'll put these out at one time so we have one discussion of all of this. I obviously pay all full taxes. I'm honest in my dealings with people. People understand that. (Applause.) My taxes are carefully managed. And I pay a lot of taxes. I've been very successful.

And I -- when I have our -- our taxes ready for this year, I'll release them. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Speaker Gingrich, is that good enough?

MR. GINGRICH: Look, he's got to decide and the people of South Carolina have to decide. But if there's anything in there that is going to help us lose the election, we should know it before the nomination. (Cheers, applause.) And if there's nothing in there -- if there's nothing in there, why not release it? I mean, it's a very simple model.

And -- but he's got to decide. It's his decision. And everybody's got to run their own campaign based on what they think is a reasonable risk. I've -- I released mine this evening. We also released the little small charitable foundation we have so people can see what we do and how we did it and what our values are. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Senator Santorum, when will we see yours?

MR. SANTORUM: Well, I do my own taxes, and they're on my computer, and I'm not home. So -- (laughter) -- and there's nobody at home right now. Until I get home, I won't get them. When I get home, I'll -- you'll get my taxes. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. KING: But you did call on the governor to release his.

MR. SANTORUM: No, someone asked me would it be OK for -- I said, yes; I don't -- I don't think it's a big deal. I mean, if Governor Romney's told what his tax rate is; mine's higher than that, I can assure you. But I can't tell you what it was. All I know is it was very painful writing the check. But I -- (inaudible) -- that's all I can tell you. (Applause.)

MR. KING: I want to -- Governor Romney, you mentioned the Democratic attacks. I want to ask you to go back in history a little bit. Back in 1967, your father set a groundbreaking -- what was then a groundbreaking standard in American politics: He released his tax returns. He released them for not one year, but for 12 years. And when he did that, he said this: One year could be a fluke, perhaps done for show.

When you release yours, will you follow your father's example?

MR. ROMNEY: Maybe. (Chuckles, applause.) I -- you know, I don't know how many years I'll release. I'll take a look at what the -- the -- what our documents are. (Jeers.) And I'll release multiple years; I don't know how many years. And -- but I'll be happy to do that.

Let me tell you, I know there are some who are very anxious to see if they can't make it more difficult for a campaign to be successful. I know the Democrats want to go after the fact that I've been successful. I'm not going to apologize for being successful. (Cheers, applause.) And -- and I'm not -- I'm not suggesting these people are doing that, but I know the Democrats will go after me on that basis, and that's why I want to release these things all at the same time.

And I -- I mean -- you know, my dad, as you know -- born in Mexico, poor, didn't get a college degree -- became head of a car company. I could have stayed in Detroit, like him, and gotten pulled up in the car company. I went off on my own. I didn't inherit money from my parents. What I have, I earned. I worked hard, the American way. (Cheers, applause.)

And I'm going to be able -- I'm going to be able to talk to President Obama in a way no one else can that's in this race right now, about how the free economy works, what it takes to put Americans back to work, and make sure he understands that this divisiveness and dividing Americans between 99 and 1 is dangerous. We are one nation under God. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: You've raised the topic of putting America back to work. I think we're ready for another question from our audience. Am I right? Oh, not quite yet. All right, so let's stay up here for a second.

Let's move to -- you mentioned putting America back to work. Let's talk about something. Apple Computer. Apple Computer is a breathtakingly important American company. Senator Santorum, it's one of the most respected companies in the country. I've handed it off, but I carry Apple products to do my work every day.

It employs about 500,000 people in China. It is based in the United States, has some employees here, about 40-something-thousand, I think 46,000, most of them in retail stores and at the headquarters;

500,000 of them are in China.

As a president of the United States, what do you do about that?

MR. SANTORUM: I'm the only person on this stage that will do something about it. I've got a specific plan in place that I've put out there, called the Made In the USA plan, for exactly these kinds of companies, that have great technology and then go somewhere else to make them because America is uncompetitive.

And that's why we have to cut the corporate tax for all corporations who manufacture and process in this country.

People have said, well, why are you doing it for corporations and only cutting it in half -- which I do -- to 17 1/2 percent for the rest? It's because the local pharmacy's not going to move to China. They're not going to -- they -- we -- the jobs that we're losing are jobs that we have to compete with other countries, and those are manufacturing jobs. The reason they're going there is not because our -- our -- our workers or our management in this country are not productive. We have great productivity gain. It's amazing the -- the transformation that has been made in the last decade or two about our manufacturing process here. It is simply government getting in the way.

None of these folks do anything. I do dramatic things that send a signal. Apple, you want -- you -- you have all those employees over there, you make all those profits over there. If you want to bring that money back, right now you pay a 35 percent tax. Under our plan, if you bring it back and invest it in plant equipment here in Charleston, you pay nothing. (Cheers, applause.) You put that money to work -- if you invest it, you pay nothing. It's a powerful incentive.

You throw on top of that the energy policy that we put out there to -- to revitalize the energy sector, you -- which will create -- again, for manufacturing, energy cost is a big deal. So we have an energy piece.

We also have a piece having to do with regulations. The Obama administration has promulgated two and a half times the number of regulations that cost American businesses over a hundred million dollars a year -- two and a half times the last 16 years of presidents. This president is putting a burden on manufacturers and business. It's the reason they're not -- we're not making things here. I'll repeal every single one of those regulations on day one. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Congressman Paul, how do you revive made in America?

REP. PAUL: You have to create the right conditions to bring these companies back, and they have to bring their capital back and shouldn't be taxed. But -- Apple's a great company, but the way you ask the question, it infers that because there's a bunch of workers overseas, it hasn't benefited a lot of people here.

The consumers obviously have been benefited by a good company, well run. But obviously there's a lot of employees with Apple in this country as well. I don't think that's the number that you have to be concerned about. A lot of people worry about us buying and the money going overseas.

MR. : Yeah.

REP. PAUL: But if you send money to China, they'll say they're paying wages over there and pay -- we send dollars over there -- what -- they don't put the dollars in a shoe box. They have to spend those dollars.

Unfortunately, they're buying our debt and perpetuating our consumerism here and our debt here. (Scattered applause.) But immediately there's a benefit to us because those dollars come back.

But also, when you get products, if they're buying products cheaper over there -- let's say the computer costs a hundred dollars instead of a thousand dollars. Well, the person's just saved \$900. That helps the economy. That \$900 stays in that person's pocket. So -- whether it's shoes or a computer. So we shouldn't be frightened about trade or sending money on.

But we have to look at the reason why they're doing this. I mean, even the car companies -- there's obviously a problem with car companies here. They're in bigger trouble, and we had to bail them out. But there are foreign companies that build cars in this country and they make a living out of this. So this -- it's more complex than that, but we have to do whatever we can.

I think the -- I think the -- the -- the union problem, the right-to-work states and -- (applause) -- of course I've chided Senator Santorum on this because he has voted, you know, against right-to-work. But we have to change these conditions to invite people back.

But believe me, the regulations and the fact that we are the issuer of the reserve currency of the world is a real -- a temporary blessing for us because it's easy for us to export our money. That's unfortunately our greatest export, and they're still taking our money. Soon, though, they're going to quit, and this whole ballgame is going to end, and we better get prepared for it. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: He mentioned you, Senator Santorum. Go ahead, quickly.

MR. SANTORUM: Congressman Paul knows, because we've talked about this before, I've already signed a pledge and said I would sign a national right-to-work bill. And when I was a senator from Pennsylvania, which is a state that is not a right-to-work state, the state made a decision not to be right to work. And I wasn't going to go to Washington and overturn that from the federal government and do that to the state. That's a very different -- different position.

REP. PAUL: May I --

MR. KING: Quickly, sir.

REP. PAUL: Yeah, the response should be, yes, I understand that. That's the way politics works: You voted the way you thought was best --

MR. SANTORUM: Well, representative government.

REP. PAUL: -- yeah -- for your state. (Applause.) But as president, are you going to represent South Carolina or Pennsylvania? That's really the question. (Applause.)

MR. SANTORUM: Well, maybe -- maybe you didn't hear what I said. I said I would support a national right-to-work law and sign it into law, and would support and advocate for one. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Well, let's continue the economic conversation with some input from a question from Twitter. If you look up here, you can see it. #CNNDebate: What is your take on SOPA, and how do you believe it affects Americans?

For those who have not been following this, SOPA is the Stop Online Piracy Act: crack down on Internet piracy, which is clearly a problem. But opponents say it's censorship.

Full disclosure: Our parent company, Time Warner, says we need a law like this because some of its products -- movies, programmings and the like -- are being ripped off online. (Boos.)

Let me start -- let me start with you, Mr. Speaker. There's two competing ends -- two engines, even -- of our economy here at ads -- at odds on this. How do you deal with it?

MR. GINGRICH: Well, you're asking a conservative about the economic interests of Hollywood. (Laughter, applause.) And I'm weighing it. I'm weighing it. I'm not -- I'm not rushing in. I'm -- I'm trying to think through all of the many fond, left-wing people who we're so eager to protect. (Laughter.)

On the other hand, you have virtually everybody who's technologically advanced, including, you know, Google and YouTube and Facebook and all the folks, who say this is going to totally mess up the Internet, and the bill in its current form is written really badly and leads to a range of censorship that is totally unacceptable.

Well, I favor freedom. (Applause.) And I think that if you -- you know, I think -- we have a Patent Office, we have copyright law. If a company finds that it has genuinely been infringed upon, it has the right to sue for -- for -- but the idea that we're going to preemptively have the government start censoring the Internet on behalf of giant corporations' economic interests strikes me as exactly the wrong thing to do. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, (right ?). Governor Romney, these companies complain -- some of them are based in Hollywood, not all of them are -- that their software, that their publishing, that their movies, that their shows are being ripped off.

MR. ROMNEY: I think he got it just about right. The -- the truth of the matter is -- (applause) -- that -- that the law as written is far too intrusive, far too expansive, far too threatening to freedom of speech and movement of information across the Internet. It would have a potentially depressing impact on one of the fastest- growing industries in America, which -- which is the Internet and all those -- those industries connected to it.

At the same time, we care very deeply about intellectual content that's going across the Internet. And if we can find a way to very narrowly, through our current laws, go after those people who are pirating, particularly those from offshore, we'll do that -- but a very broad law which gives the government the power to start stepping into the Internet and saying who can pass what to whom -- I think that's a mistake.

And so I'd say, no, I'm standing for freedom.

MR. KING: I mean -- (cheers, applause) -- it's a big issue in the country right now.

Congressman Paul and Senator Santorum, your views on this one quickly.

REP. PAUL: I was the first Republican to sign on with a host of Democrats to oppose this law. And we have worked -- (cheers, applause) -- we have had a concerted effort, and I feel like we're making achievements. There -- this bill is not going to pass, but watch out for the next one.

And I am pleased that the attitude has sort of mellowed up here, because the Republicans, unfortunately, have been on the wrong side of this issue. And this is a good example on why it's good to have somebody that can look at civil liberties and work with coalitions and bring people together.

Freedom and the Constitution bring factions together. I think this is a good example. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Those who support the law, Senator, argue tens of thousands of jobs are at stake.

MR. SANTORUM: I don't -- I don't support this law, and I agree with everybody up here that it goes too far. But I will not agree with everybody up there that there isn't something that -- that can and should be done to protect the intellectual property rights of people. The Internet is not a -- a -- a -- a free -- a free zone where anybody can do anything they want to do and trample the rights of other people. And -- and particularly when we're talking about -- in this case, we're talking about entities offshore that are doing so, that are pirating things. So the idea that the government -- that you have businesses in this country and that the government has no role to try to protect the intellectual property of people who have those rights in this country from people overseas pirating them and then selling them back into this country, I -- you know, I -- it's great; I mean, I'm for free, but I'm not for -- for people abusing the law. And that's what's happening right now, and I think something proper should be done. I agree this goes too far. But the idea that, you know, anything goes on the Internet, where did that come from? Where -- where in America does it say that anything goes. (Boos, cheers.) We have laws, and the respect of law and the rule of law is an important thing, and property rights should be respected.

MR. KING: All right. Gentlemen, I want to thank you. (Applause.) As for our audience, applaud if you wish. Stand by one second, we'll take one more break. Much more of our Southern Republican Presidential Debate to come, including this question:

After months of campaigning, if these candidates could do one thing over, what would it be? (Cheers, applause.)

(Announcements.)

MR. KING: (Cheers, applause.) Welcome back to the Southern Republican presidential debate. I'm John King. We're live in Charleston, South Carolina.

Lots more issues to wander through tonight, but I just want to take this moment. After months and

months of campaigning, maybe this is fun, maybe it isn't.

Speaker Gingrich, I want to start with you. You're at this for months and you're out there. If there's one thing, just one thing in this campaign you could do over, what would it be?

MR. GINGRICH: I would skip the opening three months, where I hired regular consultants and tried to figure out how to be a normal candidate, and I would just go straight at being a big-ideas, big-solutions, Internet-based campaign from day one, because it just didn't work. I mean, it's not who I am. I'm not capable of being a sort of traditional candidate. I'm a very idea-oriented candidate. And I think the Internet makes it possible to create a momentum of ideas that's very, very exciting.

MR. KING: Governor Romney?

MR. ROMNEY: Well, I'd have worked to get 25 more votes in Iowa, that's for sure. (Laughter.) (Applause.) And -- (laughter, applause). (Laughs.)

And -- well, let's see. I guess -- I guess I also would go back and take every moment I spent talking about one of the guys on the stage, and spent that time talking about Barack Obama, because -- (cheers, applause) -- the truth is that Barack Obama is just way over his head.

And -- and he's taking our country down a path that is very dangerous. He's making us more and more like a European social-welfare state. He's making us an entitlement society. He's taking away the rights of our citizens. He believes government should run this country.

Look, the right course for America is to return to our fundamental principles, and I would be talking about that more and probably about my colleagues less because, frankly, any one of them would be a better president than the one we got. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Senator?

MR. SANTORUM: I actually thought about that, and you know what, I wouldn't change a thing. It's -- for -- for me to be standing here in the final four is about as amazing a thing that I could have ever conceived of happening. Someone who had no money, who lost his last race, who everyone basically ignored as I traveled around South Carolina, Iowa and -- and New Hampshire and -- and just talked to people. Town hall meeting after -- 700 town hall meetings, just going around. And it proved that good ideas and hard work still pay off in America, and it just was an affirmation to me of the great process that we have. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Congressman?

REP. PAUL: I -- I can't think of any one thing that I would do differently. But I would continue to do what I'm always trying to do.

One thing that I believe about a free society is it provides the opportunity for us to work for our own virtue and excellence. And in campaigning, I think I can still learn a lot about becoming a better deliverer of a

message, and the conviction I have -- but I think if I spoke a little slower and made more conviction that I could do a better job. So I think in general I could -- I -- I will continue to work on delivering a message which I think is a great message. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: All right, gentlemen, thank you. Let's get back to our issues discussion and let's begin with a question down in our audience.

Q: Hi. I would like to ask, on the issue of amnesty of the illegal aliens, would you -- how would you secure that the American citizens would get -- keep the jobs in line first for them?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, let's start with you on that. She mentioned the word "amnesty." You have explained your position in this campaign, and as you know, some conservatives have said: No, Mr. Speaker, you say you can't deport -- maybe it's 10 (million), 11 (million); some people say it's high as 20 million -- people illegally in this country. You say it's unrealistic to deport them all, so some would have to be given a path to legal status. And as you know, many conservatives say: No, that's amnesty, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GINGRICH: Right. What I say -- let's start with -- I think you have to first of all control the border. I don't think you can pass a comprehensive bill, because nobody trusts the government. So first, you control the border. We have a bill that would have it controlled by January 1, 2014. And -- and I'm prepared both to waive all federal regulations to get it built and controlled by 2014, and I'm prepared to move up to half the people who work for Homeland Security, about 20 -- they have 23,000 employees in Washington. I'd be prepared to move half of them to Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, if that's what it took to control the border. (Applause.)

Second, I -- I favor English as the official language of government, and I think that creates a continuity. (Cheers, applause.)

Third, I would actually modernize their legal system of -- of visas because the -- currently we make it too difficult to come here legally and too easy to come here illegally. (Applause.)

Fourth, I would make it much easier to deport people, so if you are a noncitizen who belongs, say, to MS-13, an El Salvadorean gang, you -- we should be able to get rid of you in two weeks, not two years, and we should have a much easier deportation. (Applause.)

Fifth, I favor a guest worker program, and I would outsource it to American Express, Visa or MasterCard, because they can run it without fraud and the federal government's hopeless.

So you want a system that is accurate and that is anti-fraud, which leads you then to be able to say to private employers, if you hire somebody who's illegal, we're going to have an enormous economic sanction, because there will be no excuse once you have a guest worker program that's legal.

Then you get down to the question of people who are already here. I believe -- and what I just described -- most of them will go home. The one group I singled out -- and we -- and we do have a lively debate on this up here -- there are people who have been here 25 years. They've been working, they've been paying their bills; they're married, they have children, they may have grandchildren; they may be in your church.

Now, I don't think we're going to deport grandmothers and grandfathers who have 25 years of networking and relationships in a community. So I've suggested a World War II-style draft board where local citizens would review the applications, you could only apply if you proved that you were financially responsible, you proved you had genuine family ties, and you had an American family sponsor you. You still wouldn't get amnesty; you wouldn't get citizenship. You would get a residency permit. In order to apply for citizenship, you would have to go back to your own country and get in line behind everybody else and be processed as a person from that country.

But I think it would -- I think this is a doable, solvable, practical solution. And I think trying to deport grandmothers and grandfathers will never pass the Congress and would never be accepted by the American people. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Governor Romney, is that the doable, practical solution?

MR. ROMNEY: You know, the issue of illegal immigration is relatively straightforward, compared to the tough issues we face -- issues like how we're going to compete with China as it grows a military which is of extraordinary scale and a navy of that scale; how we're going to deal with radical violent jihadists; Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, making sure they're solvent. We've got real challenges that are tough.

This one is not tough: You build a fence, you have enough Border Patrol agents to secure the fence, and you also have a system of giving to people who come here legally an identification card, and you expect employers and insist that employers check that card before they hire someone.

If they don't check the card, if they don't run it through the U.S. database and get an instant response from the government or from Mastercard, Visa, American Express or whomever, then those -- those employers are going to get severely sanctioned. If you do that, we solve the problem of illegal immigration.

And with regards to those that have come here illegally now, we're not going to round them all up and deport them, but we're also not going to give them a preferential pathway to become permanent residents or citizenships -- citizens. They need to go back home, apply for citizenship, apply for permanent residency, like everyone else. Coming here illegally should not give you an advantage being able to become a permanent resident of the United States. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Do you have the same view, Senator?

MR. SANTORUM: Well, I come at it from -- as being the -- the son of an immigrant. And my grandfather came to this country and brought my dad when he was 7 years old. And that's the story that I -- that I love, am familiar with and believe in my -- in the heart of hearts that -- that immigration is -- people who want to come to this country and be Americans is really the continuing, you know, infusion of freedom and -- and enthusiasm for our country.

But when you come here illegally, the first act you take is to break our law, that's a different story. And I -- you know, we have two folks here, both Governor Romney and Speaker Gingrich: Mitt Romney has the

position now that people have to go home, but as few as just a few years ago, he said that there could be a pathway to citizenship. He's repeatedly said that. Now he's changed his position. I understand that. He's done that on a couple of occasions.

And -- and you have Speaker Gingrich, who -- who believes there needs to be a legal pathway. That's where President Obama's position is. I think we need a -- again, just like health care, we need a clear contrast, someone who can say, look, we -- I have always been for making sure that the law is enforced, and enforced fairly. I'm -- I -- I grieve for people who have been here 25 years and maybe have to be separated from their family if they -- if they were picked up and deported.

But my father grieved for his father when he came to this country and lived here five years and other folks who sacrificed, who came here to America, did it the right way according to the law, because America was worth it. And if you want to be an American, the first thing you should do is respect our laws and obey our laws. And -- (cheers, applause) -- and the idea that someone, whether it's -- whether it's either of these two gentlemen, whether the idea that someone who came here and lived here 25 years has only broken one law, if they've worked for 25 years they've been breaking the law for 25 years. (Applause.) If they've been working they have probably stolen someone's Social Security number and they've committed Social Security fraud. They've -- this -- this is not just a single occurrence. It's an ongoing issue. And if we treat people like that differently than we do with a mother who out of a desperate situation goes out and -- and shoplifts or does something and gets thrown in jail, what are we saying -- that we're going to treat people in this country who do things for their family differently than those who are here illegally? I don't think so. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: You mentioned both Governor Romney and the speaker. Take a -- take a moment quickly and then I want to bring Congressman Paul into the conversation. He essentially is saying he doesn't trust you on this.

MR. ROMNEY: Well, you know, I ran for president four years ago. This was the position I described when I ran four years ago. Wrote a book, laid out my position. I actually agreed, I think, with what you just said, which is I believe those people who have come here illegally should not be given a preferential path to become permanent residents or citizens of this country.

You shake your head. I'm --

MR. SANTORUM: That's not in the book.

MR. ROMNEY: OK --

MR. SANTORUM: I'll be happy to show you the quotes of what you said --

MR. ROMNEY: OK, good, good, good.

MR. SANTORUM: -- that people should have a pathway to citizenship.

MR. ROMNEY: And the path --

MR. SANTORUM: Not -- not -- not -- not citizenship; pathway to be legal in this country. Not citizenship.

MR. ROMNEY: And the pathway that I've described is that those individuals who have come here illegally should be able to register in this country, have a temporary period to arrange their affairs, and return home and get at the back of the -- at the back of the line like everyone else. And the position I've had is that the people who come here illegally should not be given a preferential pathway relative to others but should be able to get in the same line, at the back of the line.

And I agree with the senator. I'm sorry you don't acknowledge my agreement, but I agree with you that this is a nation at laws. At the same time, I think it's important -- I'm glad you mentioned this, because I didn't in my answer, and that is, we need to underscore the fact that we're a party of legal immigration. We like legal immigration. (Applause.) We want legal immigration.

And to protect legal immigration, we want to stop illegal immigration. And we don't want to do anything that would suggest to people, come on in here, just wait long enough, whether it's five years or 10 years, wait long enough and we'll take you all in on an amnesty basis. I want people to get in line legally.

MR. KING: Congressman Paul, you're from a border state. If this is a problem -- you've heard your colleagues talk about making sure employers -- companies that hire large numbers of people -- making sure they get the message they can't hire illegals. What about individuals? About a quarter of the illegal immigrants in the country work for individuals. If this is a problem, if I hired an illegal immigrant, say, to clean my home, should I be prosecuted for doing that?

REP. PAUL: I don't believe you should be, because I think those laws are misdirected. That makes you the policeman or the businessman the policeman or the Catholic Church the policeman if they do anything to help an illegal immigrant. It should be the law enforcers, and that is the border guards and the federal government in charge of immigration. So no, I don't agree with those laws.

But that doesn't mean that I'm soft on the issue of illegal immigration. It's illegal. I can't imagine anybody standing up here and saying, oh, I'm for illegal immigration. We're all against illegal immigration.

But I think what we fail to do is -- is look at the incentives, and it has a lot to do with economics. There's an economic incentive for them to come, for immigrants to come, but there's also an incentive for some of our people in this country not to take a job that's a low-paying job. You're not supposed to say that, but that is true.

But there's also an economic incentive in the welfare state for immigrants to come in.

In Texas, we suffer from the fact that there are federal mandates that we have to take care of their medical needs and their educational needs, and it bankrupts some of our -- our school districts and our hospitals. So it's those mandates.

But we need a more generous immigration policy -- it shouldn't be legal -- but we need more resources. But I find that the resources are all overseas. I -- when I was in the military, I was on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and that is a no-man's land. You can't see the border. At least we can -- we can see the

river south of Texas; we know where the Rio Grande is. Over there, we can't see it. But we're over there fighting and dying over that border, looking for problems. Why don't we take those resources and quit pretending we can defend those borders and put them on our borders and take care of our needs here? (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Go ahead, Mr. Speaker.

MR. GINGRICH: Yeah, I -- John, I just think if you're going to raise immigration, I want to make the point that on the very first day that I'm inaugurated, I will issue an executive order to the Justice Department to drop the lawsuits against South Carolina, Alabama and Arizona. (Cheers, applause.) The federal government should enforce the law, not stop states from helping it enforce the law.

MR. KING: I think we have nodding heads. I assume we have agreement on that.

But let's move on to another issue that came up in the campaign right here in South Carolina this week, and that's the life issue. Mr. Speaker, your campaign sent out a mailing to South Carolina Republicans across this state, essentially questioning Governor Romney's commitment on this issue, saying that he has changed his position on the abortion issue.

If you'll recall, I moderated a debate back in New Hampshire in June. There were seven candidates then. We have four tonight. But when this came up, we talked about it briefly, and then I asked: Is this a fair game, an issue in this campaign, or is it case-closed?

Mr. Cain, who was with us at the time, said case-closed, and I paused. No one else took the opportunity to speak up.

If it was case closed then, why is it a legitimate issue now?

MR. GINGRICH: You just said nobody else spoke, so nobody else said yes, that's case closed. I mean, Herman Cain thought it was case closed. The rest of us didn't -- it wasn't a -- a particular issue in the fight that night. I mean, we are allowed to run our own campaigns, John. It's not an automatic requirement that we fit it in your debate schedule. (Applause.)

This is -- look, this is a very straightforward question. Governor Romney -- and I -- and I accept this -- I mean, Governor Romney has said that he had a -- an experience in a lab and became pro-life, and I -- I accept that. After he became pro-life, "Romneycare" does pay for tax-paid abortions. "Romneycare" has written into it Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the country, by name; does not have any right-to-life group written into it. He did appoint pro-abortion judges. And a branch of the government which included his appointees did agree to fund an abortion clinic for Planned Parenthood. All that occurred after he had become pro-life.

Now, those are all facts which we validated. And essentially that's a legitimate part of the campaign is to say, OK, if you're genuinely pro-life, how come these things are occurring?

MR. KING: Governor Romney, he questions whether you're genuinely pro-life. (Applause.)

MR. ROMNEY: I'm not questioned on character or integrity very often, and I -- I don't feel like standing here for that. But let me clarify the things which are wrong in what the speaker just said. And -- and he can get a scintilla of truth in there to make it seem like this is a significant issue. But let's go through one by one.

First, in "Romneycare," there's no mention of abortion whatsoever. The courts in Massachusetts, the Supreme Court was the body that decided that all times that there was any subsidy of health care in Massachusetts that one received abortion care. That was not done by the legislature, would not be done by me either. I would have vetoed such a thing. That was done by the courts, not by the legislature or by me.

Number two, it's true, somewhere in that bill of ours, 70 pages, there's the mention of the word(s) "Planned Parenthood," but it describes a person at a technical advisory board about payment structures. There's no requirement -- or no participation of -- of Planned Parenthood in our health care plan.

With regards to judges, I appointed probably 50 or 60 judges -- at the trial court level, mostly, the great majority. These were former prosecutors; 80 percent of them former prosecutors. We don't have a litmus test for appointing judges -- asking them if they're pro-life or not pro-life. These were people going after crimes and -- and -- and the like. I didn't get to appoint any Supreme Court justices.

I -- I am pro-life. And the Massachusetts Citizens for Life and several other family-oriented groups wrote a letter two weeks ago and said they'd watched my record, that I was an avidly pro-life governor. I am a pro-life governor; I am a pro-life individual.

And I -- I have to be honest here. It is -- this is not the time to be doubting people's words, or questioning their integrity. I am pro-life -- by the way, is there any possibility that I've ever made a mistake in that regard, I didn't see something that I should have seen? Possibly. But you can count on me, as president of the United States, to pursue a policy that protects the life of unborn, whether here in this country or overseas. And I'll reverse the policies of this president. Thank you. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, he says you're questioning his integrity.

MR. GINGRICH: Well, I'm going to yield to Senator Santorum.

MR. KING: Senator?

MR. SANTORUM: I just want to make out one point. And there are a lot of legislatures here -- legislators here in the room, and they -- and they know this to be the truth; that if you write a piece of legislation and you -- and you say "medical care," and you do not specifically mention that abortion is not covered, we know from every court decision at the state and federal level that the federal courts and state courts will require it. That is someone (sic) every governor knows, every state legislator knows. And so when Governor Romney did not put that in the bill, you can't say: Oh, gee, surprise, the court made us cover abortions. He knew very well that the court would make him cover abortions. That's number one. (Applause.)

Number -- number two, what we're talking about here is someone who's not going to just check the boxes

and say -- (whispering) -- yes, I'm pro-life.

We get a lot of folks who just whisper into the microphone that they're pro-life, and then you have other people go out and fight the battle and defend life and come out of the trenches and actually work to make sure that the dignity of every human life -- innocent human life in this country is protected. And I've done that. (Cheers, applause.)

And I -- and I would say, in -- in -- in -- in contrast with Speaker Gingrich, who, on the social issues in particular when he was speaker and even afterwards -- they were pushed in the back bench. There was a Pledge to America that the Congress tried to put together in 2010. I got phone calls ringing off the hook that Speaker Gingrich went in and told them, keep social issues out of the Pledge to America for the 2010 elections, and we need you to come in and help to try to convince these folks to put that back into the pledge. We don't need someone who in the backrooms is going to get up and say, social issues in the front -- are in the back of the bus, and then come out here and try to pretend they're pro-life. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Governor Romney and then Speaker Gingrich. He mentioned you both.

MR. GINGRICH: Sure.

MR. KING: Please, quickly.

MR. ROMNEY: Senator, I -- I admire the fact that you've been a stalwart defender of -- and pro-life, and in a state where that's not easy.

I was also a governor in a state where being pro-life was not easy. And -- and I -- and I battled hard. What came to my desk was a piece of legislation that we're going to redefine when life begins. In our state, we said life began at conception. The legislature wanted to change that to say no, we're going to do it at implantation. I vetoed that.

The legislature also said we want to allow cloning for purposes of -- of creating new embryos for -- for testing. I vetoed that.

The legislature did not want abstinence education. I pushed and pursued abstinence education.

There was an effort to also have a morning-after pill provided to, as I recall, young women in their teens. I covered the exact age. I vetoed that.

I stood as a pro-life governor, and that's why the Massachusetts pro-life family association supported my record as governor, endorsed my record as governor.

I did my very best to be a pro-life governor. I will be a pro-life president. I'm proud of that. I wrote about it in my book. My record is solid.

I appreciate your record. I hope you'll appreciate mine. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, he -- he mentioned you specifically. Then we want to move on, but please

respond.

MR. GINGRICH: Well, the fact is that I voted with Henry Hyde, who was the leading pro-life advocate in the House for a generation. I had a 98.6 percent pro-life voting record. The only one we disagreed on was welfare reform, which they scored, for reasons we never understood. But otherwise it was a perfect record on pro-life.

When I was speaker, we twice passed a bill, that actually Rick was very active in, to end partial-birth abortion. Twice it was vetoed by Clinton, but twice we passed it. In the 2010 election, the freshman class has the highest percentage of pro-life members ever in history, and my job was to maximize their winning. And the fact is we won a huge victory in 2010 with the largest number of pro-life members ever elected in a freshman class. (Applause.)

MR. KING: All right, let's move on. Let's take another question. Congressman, I'll bring you in on this one.

Let's take a question now from social media. A question --

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: (Off mic) -- Ron! (Off mic.)

MR. KING: Before we move on, you want in on this issue? They want you in on this issue. Would you like in on this issue? (Cheers, applause.)

REP. PAUL: But John, once again, it's a medical subject, and I'm a doctor, you know! (Laughs.) (Cheers.)

No, I do want to make a couple comments, because I can remember the very early years studying obstetrics, and I was told -- and it was before the age of abortion, and I was told taking care of a woman that's pregnant, you have two patients. And I think that -- that solves a lot of the problem about, you know, when life begins and all. (Applause.)

And I also experienced a time later on in my training, in the 1960s, when the culture was changing. The Vietnam War was going on, the drugs were there, and pornography came in, and abortion became prevalent even though it was illegal.

So the morality of the country changed, but then the law followed up. When the morality changed, it will -- reflects on the laws. The law is very important. We should have these laws. But law will not correct the basic problem, and that's the morality of the people that we must do. (Cheers, applause.)

Now, just very, very briefly, I want to talk a little bit about that funding, because the flaw there is, if you -- if you send funding out and you say, well, you can have it for birth control but not for abortion, all funds are fungible. Even funds that go to any hospital, if you say, well, it's not for birth control and it's not for Planned Parenthood, it's not for abortion -- if you send it to the hospital, they can still use that money. This is an indictment of government- run medicine, because you never can sort that all out. (Cheers, applause.) You need the government out of that business, or you will always argue over who's paying what bills.

MR. KING: All right. Very quickly, Senator.

MR. SANTORUM: I think that -- that was directed at me, and so I would just say this.

REP. PAUL: (No ?).

MR. SANTORUM: Congressman Paul has a National Right to Life voting record of 50 percent, which is pretty much what Harry Reid's National Right to Life voting record is. So for -- to go out and say that, you know, you're someone who stands up for the right to life, you repeatedly vote against bills on a federal level to promote the right to life, and you say that this is an individual personal decision or state decision. Life should be protected, and you should have the willingness to stand up on a federal level and any level of government and protect what our -- excuse me -- what our declaration protects, which is the right of our Creator to life, and that is a federal issue, not a state issue. (Applause.)

MR. KING: Quickly, sir.

REP. PAUL: Well, just -- just for the record, I wasn't even thinking about you when I was giving my statement.

MR. SANTORUM: (Off mic.)

REP. PAUL: So you are overly sensitive. (Laughter, cheers, applause.)

But it -- but it is true that we have a disagreement on how we approach it. I follow what my understanding is of the Constitution, and it -- it does allow for the states to deal with difficult problems. As a matter of fact, it allows the states to deal with almost all the problems, if you look at it. It is not given -- these powers aren't given to the Congress.

I see abortion as a violent act. All other violence is handled by the states: murder, burglary, violence. That's a state issue. (Cheers, applause.) So don't try to say that I'm less pro-life because I want to be particular about the way we do it and allow the states the prerogative.

This is the solution. This is the solution, because if we would allow the states to write their laws, take away the jurisdiction by a majority vote in the Congress, you repeal Roe versus Wade overnight instead of waiting year after year to change the court system. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: All right. We need to take one more break. Gentlemen, stand by.

Less than 35 hours away now from the polls opening right here in South Carolina, a state that is crucial, often decisive, in Republican presidential politics. Stay with us and hear the candidates' closing arguments to the voters of a state that takes pride in picking presidents. (Cheers, applause.)

(Announcements.)

(Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Welcome back to the Southern Republican Presidential Debate. We're in Charleston, South Carolina tonight. Gentlemen, we're running out of time. Time flies. I wish we could stay all night. I don't suspect you have campaigning to do. I don't suspect you'll agree to that. I didn't think so. (Laughter.)

You know the history of this state. We're inside 35 hours now from voters in South Carolina going to the polls, and we all know the history of this state. In modern times, the winner of the South Carolina Republican primary has gone on to be your party's nominee. We have an interesting race at the moment: Senator Santorum wins Iowa, Governor Romney wins New Hampshire, everybody's waiting to see. Most people believe, Governor Romney wins here, he would be the prohibitive favorite.

I want each of you, since we have a short time left -- and I'll start on the end, we'll come down the line. Congressman Paul, make your case. Make your case. South Carolina essentially faces this decision: not so fast, let's continue the race; or embrace Governor Romney. Make your case to the people of South Carolina in these final hours.

REP. PAUL: Well, South Carolina is known for their respect for liberty. And a lot of people will ask the question -- (applause) -- they will ask the question in a way, what will you do for South Carolina or what will you do for New Hampshire, what will you do for the various states. But if you understand liberty, it's equal for everybody. It benefits everybody. So if you have a protection of liberty, which is the purpose of the Constitution -- protection of individual liberty -- and that means you protect the private property rights system. And if you do that, that benefits everybody.

And this is what we have to do, is convince people that we can bring people together with the understanding of what those -- those beliefs were that made America great.

And it is freedom. It isn't this continued spending money and debt.

This is the reason -- we're in a mountain of debt, and we have to deal with it. We really never even got around to talking about that tonight. And one of my very modest proposals -- (cheers, applause) -- my modest proposal is in the one: first year, cut a trillion dollars out of the budget, to get started. (Cheers, applause.) Because the debt bubble is a great burden. It's a debt -- it's a burden to all of us. And as I mentioned earlier, these programs are going to go down, if we don't get our budget under control. And we have to be willing to look at overseas spending and all of the entitlement system here in this country. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker.

MR. GINGRICH: Well, let me start -- I want to thank CNN, and I want to thank the people of Charleston for a very, very interesting and very useful evening.

And we have a real challenge. It is imperative that we defeat Barack Obama. (Cheers, applause.) This is, I believe, the most dangerous president of our lifetime, and if he is reelected, after the disaster he has been, the level of radicalism of his second term will be truly frightening.

But in addition to beating Obama, we have to have a team victory in the Senate and the House, and we

have to have a principled victory, so the American people will send a signal that in January of (2000- turn-13 ?), they want very dramatic, very deep change in Washington. (Applause.)

I believe the only way to create the momentum is to be able to overcome his billion-dollar campaign with a series of debates which decisively convince the American people that a Saul Alinsky radical who is incompetent cannot be reelected. And I hope you will vote for me on Saturday as the person who could do that. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Governor Romney.

MR. ROMNEY: I agree with a lot of what these last two men have just said. I think this is an absolutely critical election. I believe that the Founders took very careful thought in -- in the preparation of the words of our Declaration of Independence, that said that the Creator had endowed us with certain unalienable rights -- not the state, but the Creator -- among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And by virtue of those words, the pursuit of happiness, this became the place on the planet where we were able to pursue our dreams as we might choose. People came here from all over the world, wishing to pursue happiness in their own way. And that has made us the most powerful economic engine in the world, where we can guard freedom because our military is the strongest in the world coming from that powerful economic engine.

This president's changing that. He's changing the very nature of America. He's turning us not from a -- a -- a merit society, an opportunity society where people are free to choose their own course, but instead he's making us an entitlement society where people think they're entitled to what other people have, where government takes from some and gives to others. That has never been the source of American greatness.

We need to return to the principles upon which this country was founded. Our president said, I think in a very revealing way, that he wants to fundamentally transform America. He's wrong; we need to restore the values that made America the hope of the Earth. And I understand those values. (Applause.) I will do everything in my power to restore those values by keeping America free, by fighting for free enterprise, by standing up to President Obama and pointing out how he has made it almost impossible for our private sector to reboot. I will get America working again. I will defeat Barack Obama and keep America as it's always been, the shining city on a hill. Thank you. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: Senator Santorum.

MR. SANTORUM: I agree with Governor Romney 100 percent on what he said about what the -- what the -- what the stakes are.

The question is: Who's the best person to take on President Obama? I would make the argument that a conviction conservative who has a clear contrast with President Obama on the most important issues of the day is the best person -- someone who has a clear contrast on health care, a clear contrast on global warming, a clear contrast on the Wall Street bailout -- will talk about the one issue -- that huge issue in the last couple of years where government has come in and taken over, and both Newt and Governor Romney have supported that.

We're -- we need someone who not only says now they're going to stand up for conservative principles -- the big issues; (plus ?) someone who has a track record of doing so, and winning. I'm the only one in this race that's ever defeated a Democratic incumbent. I did it for the Congress and I did it for the Senate. (Applause.)

We're the only people in this race that actually has won a swing state. And I did it because I have a plan like I outlined today. I come from those states. I come from the background -- I come with the working-class and strong credentials not just with a plan, but with the character that fits in with exactly the voters we need -- those Reagan Democrats in Pennsylvania and Ohio and Michigan and Indiana and Wisconsin. Those are the votes and those are the states. You want to win? Elect someone who can win in the states we have to win and draw the clear contrast with President Obama.

South Carolina, you've been told in the past you've got to settle for a moderate because they can win. And you said -- when the last time we had a situation like this in 1980, you said: No, we're going to take the strong conviction conservative, and you voted for Reagan before Reagan was the Reagan we knew. Vote for the one who can do the job that America needs. Vote for me. (Cheers, applause.)

MR. KING: That concludes our debate this evening. I want to thank all of our candidate for their time tonight. I want to thank our wonderful audience. We also want to thank the people of South Carolina -- I do, for CNN -- (cheers, applause) -- I know the candidates do as well.

Tune in to CNN 6 p.m. Eastern on Saturday, our special coverage of the South Carolina presidential primary. (Cheers, applause continue.)

Also, next Thursday we'll be live in Jacksonville, Florida, for a Republican presidential debate there.