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PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

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Republican Candidates Debate in North Charleston, South Carolina

January 14, 2016



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PARTICIPANTS:

- Former Governor Jeb Bush (FL);
- Ben Carson;
- Governor Chris Christie (NJ);
- Senator Ted Cruz (TX);
- Governor John Kasich (OH);
- Senator Marco Rubio (FL);
- Donald Trump;

MODERATORS:

- Maria Bartiromo (Fox Business Network); and
- Neil Cavuto (Fox Business Network)

CAVUTO: It is 9:00 p.m. here at the North Charleston Coliseum and Performing Arts Center in South Carolina. Welcome to the sixth Republican presidential of the 2016 campaign, here on the Fox Business Network. I'm Neil Cavuto, alongside my friend and co-moderator Maria Bartiromo.

BARTIROMO: Tonight we are working with Facebook to ask the candidates the questions voters want answered. And according to Facebook, the U.S. election has dominated the global conversation, with 131 million people talking about the 2016 race. That makes it the number one issue talked about on Facebook last year worldwide.

CAVUTO: Now, the seven candidates on the stage tonight were selected based on their standing in six national polls, as well as polls in the early-voting states of Iowa and New Hampshire, those standings determining the position on the stage of the candidates tonight. And here they are.

Businessman Donald Trump. [*applause*]

Texas senator Ted Cruz. [*applause*]

Florida senator Marco Rubio. [*applause*]

Neurosurgeon Ben Carson. [*applause*]

New Jersey governor Chris Christie. [*applause*]

Former Florida governor Jeb Bush.

And Ohio governor John Kasich. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: Tonight's rules are simple: up to 90 seconds for each answer, one minute for each follow-up response. And if a candidate goes over the allotted time, you'll hear this. [*bell rings*] So let's get started. Candidates, jobs and growth — two of the biggest issues facing the country right now. In his State of the Union address earlier this week, the president said, quote, "we have the strongest, most durable economy in the world."

And according to our Facebook research, jobs is one of the biggest issues resonating across the country, including here in South Carolina. The president is touting 14 million new jobs and an unemployment rate cut in half.

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The president said that anyone who claims America's economy is in decline is peddling fiction. Senator Cruz, what do you see that he doesn't?

CRUZ: Well, Maria, thank you for that question, and let me say thank you to the state of South Carolina for welcoming us.

Let me start — I want to get to the substance of the question on jobs, but I want to start with something. Today, many of us picked up our newspapers, and we were horrified to see the sight of 10 American sailors on their knees, with their hands on their heads.

In that State of the Union, President Obama didn't so much as mention the 10 sailors that had been captured by Iran. President Obama's preparing to send \$100 billion or more to the Ayatollah Khamenei. And I'll tell you, it was heartbreaking.

But the good news is the next commander-in-chief is standing on this stage. [applause] And I give you my word, if I am elected president, no service man or service woman will be forced to be on their knees, and any nation that captures our fighting men will feel the full force and fury of the United States of America. [applause]

Now, on to your substantive question. The president tried to paint a rosy picture of jobs. And you know, he's right. If you're a Washington lobbyist, if you make your money in and around Washington, things are doing great. The millionaires and billionaires are doing great under Obama. But we have the lowest percentage of Americans working today of any year since 1977. Median wages have stagnated. And the Obama-Clinton economy has left behind the working men and women of this country.

The reason all of us are here is we believe we should be fighting for the working men and women of this country, and not Washington, D.C.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir. [applause]

CAVUTO: Governor Kasich, we are not even two weeks into this stock trading year, but [inaudible] investors already lost \$1.6 trillion in market value. That makes it the worst start to a new year ever. Many worry that things will get even worse, and that banks and financial stocks are particularly vulnerable.

Now, if this escalates, like it did back when Barack Obama first assumed the presidency, what actions would you take if this same thing happens all over again just as, in this example, you are taking over the presidency?

KASICH: Look, it takes three things basically to grow jobs. And I've done it when I was in Washington when we had a balanced budget; had four years of balanced budgets; paid down a half-trillion of debt. And our economy was growing like crazy. It's the same thing that I did in Ohio. It's a simple formula: common sense regulations, which is why I think we should freeze all federal regulations for one year, except for health and safety. It requires tax cuts, because that sends a message to the job creators that things are headed the right way. And if you tax cuts — if you cut taxes for corporations, and you cut taxes for individuals, you're going to make things move, particularly the corporate tax, which is the highest, of course, in the — in the world.

But in addition to that, we have to have fiscal discipline. We have to show that we can march to a balanced budget. And when you do that, when you're in a position of managing regulations; when you reduce taxes; and when you have fiscal discipline, you see the job creators begin to get very comfortable with the fact that they can invest.

Right now, you don't have the — you have taxes that are too high. You have regulations — I mean, come on, they're affecting everybody here, particularly our small businesses. They are — they're in a position where they're smothering people. And I mean, are you kidding me? We're nowhere close to a balanced budget or fiscal discipline.

Those three things put together are going to give confidence to job creators and you will begin to see wages rise. You will begin to see jobs created in a robust economy. And how do I know it? Because I've done it. I did it as the chairman of the Budget Committee, working with Senator Domenici. And I've done it in the state of Ohio as the chief executive.

Our wages are growing faster than the national average. We're running surpluses. And we can take that message and that formula to Washington to lift every single American to a better life. [applause]

BARTIROMO: We know that recent global events have many people worried — Iran detaining American sailors, forcing them to apologize; North Korea and its nuclear ambitions; an aggressive China; and a Middle East that continues to

deteriorate, not to mention ISIS is getting stronger.

Governor Christie, sometimes it seems the world is on fire. Where and when should a president use military action to restore order?

CHRISTIE: Well, Maria, I'm glad to have heard from you in the summary of that question about what's going on in the world. Because Tuesday night, I watched story time with Barack Obama. And I've got to tell you, it sounded like everything in the world was going amazing, you know? [applause]

The fact is, there's a number of things that the next president is going to have to do to clean up this mess. The first thing is we have to strengthen our alliances around the world. And the best way to do that is to start talking to our allies again and having them be able to count on our word.

Lots of people will say lots of different things about me in this campaign and others, but the one thing they've never said about me is that I'm misunderstood. And so when we talk to our allies and we give them our word, in a Christie administration, they know we're going to keep it.

Next, we have to talk to our adversaries, and we have to make sure they understand the limits of our patience. And this president, given what Ted said right at the beginning, he's absolutely right. It's a — it's absolutely disgraceful that Secretary Kerry and others said in their response to what's going on in Iran that this was a good thing; it showed how the relationship was getting better.

The president doesn't understand — and by the way, neither does Secretary Clinton — and here's my warning to everybody out in the audience tonight. If you're worried about the world being on fire, you're worried about how we're going to use our military, you're worried about strengthening our military and you're worried most of all about keeping your homes and your families safe and secure, you cannot give Hillary Clinton a third term of Barack Obama's leadership.

I will not do that. If I'm the nominee, she won't get within 10 miles of the White House. [applause]

BARTIROMO: Just to be clear Governor, where and when would you use military action?

CHRISTIE: Military action, Maria, would be used when it was absolutely necessary to protect American lives and protect American interests around the world. We are not the world's policeman, but we need to stand up and be ready.

And the problem, Maria, is that the military is not ready, either. We need to rebuild our military, and this president has let it diminish to a point where tinpot dictators like the mullahs in Iran are taking our Navy ships. It is disgraceful, and in a Christie administration, they would know much, much better than to do that. [applause]

CAVUTO: Governor Bush, the president just told the nation two nights ago that America is back and that the idea that our enemies are getting stronger or that this country is getting weaker, well, it's just rhetoric and hot air. Now other Democrats go even further, sir, saying Republicans even suggesting such comments actually embolden our enemies. I guess they would include you. What do you say?

BUSH: Well first of all, the idea that somehow we're better off today than the day that Barack Obama was inaugurated president of the United States is totally an alternative universe. The simple fact is that the world has been torn asunder.

Think about it. With grandiose language, the president talks about red lines and nothing to follow it up; talks about ISIS being the JV team, they form a caliphate the size of Indiana with 35 (thousand) to 40,000 battle-tested terrorists. He's missing the whole point, that America's leadership in the world is required for peace and stability.

In the crowd today is Major General James Livingston, who's the co-chairman of my campaign here in South Carolina, a Medal of Honor recipient. [applause]

I've learned from him that what we need to achieve is peace through strength, which means we need to rebuild the military. In this administration, every weapon system has been gutted, in this administration, the force levels are going down to a level where we can't even project force. Our friends no longer think we have their back and our enemies no longer fear us, and we're in a much difficult — we're in a much different position than we should be.

And for the life of me, I have no understanding why the president thinks that everything is going well. Terrorism is on the run, China, Russia is advancing their agenda at warp speed, and we pull back.

As president of the United States, I will be a commander in chief that will have the back of the military. We will rebuild the

military to make sure that it is a solid force, not to be the world's policeman, but to make sure that in a peaceful world, people know that the United States is there to take care of our own national interests and take care of our allies. [applause]

CAVUTO: So I take it from that you do not agree with the president.

BUSH: No. And worse — worse yet, to be honest with you, Hillary Clinton would be a national security disaster.

Think about it. She wants to continue down the path of Iran, Benghazi, the Russian reset, Dodd-Frank, all the things that have — that have gone wrong in this country, she would be a national security mess. And that is wrong.

And you know what? Here's the problem. If she gets elected, she's under investigation with the FBI right now. If she gets elected, her first 100 days, instead of setting an agenda, she might be going back and forth between the White House and the courthouse. We need to stop that. [laughter and applause]

CAVUTO: Senator Rubio, the president says that ISIS doesn't threaten our national existence like a Germany or a Japan back in World War II, that the terror group is nothing more than twisted souls plotting attacks in their garages.

But House Homeland Security Committee recently said that over 1,000 ongoing investigations of homegrown extremism in 50 states. So how do you define the threat? Germany then or dangerous nut cases now?

RUBIO: Yeah, I would go, first of all, one step further in this description of Hillary Clinton. She wouldn't just be a disaster, Hillary Clinton is disqualified from being commander in chief of the United States. [applause]

Someone who cannot handle intelligence information appropriately cannot be commander in chief and someone who lies to the families of those four victims in Benghazi can never be president of the United States. Ever. [applause]

On the issue of Barack Obama, Barack Obama does not believe that America is a great global power. Barack Obama believes that America is a arrogant global power that needs to be cut down to size. And that's how you get a foreign policy where we cut deals with our enemies like Iran and we betray our allies like Israel and we gut our military and we go around the world like he has done on 10 separate occasions and apologized for America.

He doesn't understand the threat in ISIS. He consistently underestimates it but I do not. There is a war against ISIS, not just against ISIS but against radical jihadists terrorists, and it is a war that they win or we win.

When I'm president of the United States, we are going to win this war on ISIS. The most powerful intelligence agency in the world is going to tell us where we are, the most powerful military in the world is going to destroy them. And if we capture any of them alive, they are getting a one-way ticket to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and we are going to find out everything they know. [applause]

CAVUTO: Thank you, Senator.

BARTIROMO: Dr. Carson, the president says he does not want to treat ISIS as a foreign army, but ISIS is neither a country nor a government. How do you attack a network that does not respect national borders?

CARSON: Well, I'm very happy to get a question this early on. I was going to ask you to wake me up when that time came. [laughter]

You know, I find it really quite fascinating some of the president's proclamations. The fact of the matter is he doesn't realize that we now live in the 21st century, and that war is very different than it used to be before. Not armies massively marching on each other and air forces, but now we have dirty bombs and we have cyber attacks and we have people who will be attacking our electrical grid. And, you know, we have a whole variety of things that they can do and they can do these things simultaneously. And we have enemies who are obtaining nuclear weapons that they can explode in our exoatmosphere and destroy our electric grid.

I mean, just think about a scenario like that. They explode the bomb, we have an electromagnetic pulse. They hit us with a cyberattack simultaneously and dirty bombs. Can you imagine the chaos that would ensue at that point? He needs to recognize that those kinds of things are in fact an existential threat to us.

But here's the real key. We have the world's best military, even though he's done everything he can to diminish it. And the fact of the matter is if we give them a mission and we don't tie their hands behind their back, they can get it accomplished. [applause]

CAVUTO: Mr. Trump, at the State of the Union, the president pointed to a guest who was a Syrian refugee you might recall whose wife and daughter and other family members were killed in an air attack. Now he fled that country seeking asylum here, ultimately ended up in Detroit where he's now trying to start a new life.

The president says that that doctor is the real face of these refugees and not the one that you and some of your colleagues on this stage are painting; that you prefer the face of fear and terror and that you would refuse to let in anyone into this country seeking legitimate asylum. How do you answer that?

TRUMP: It's not fear and terror, it's reality. You just have to look today at Indonesia, bombings all over. [*applause*]

You look at California, you look, frankly, at Paris where there's a — the strictest no-gun policy of any city anywhere in the world, and you see what happens: 130 people dead with many to follow. They're very, very badly wounded. They will — some will follow. And you look around, and you see what's happening, and this is not the case when he introduced the doctor — very nice, everything perfect but that is not representative of what you have in that line of migration.

That could be the great Trojan Horse. It could be people that are going to do great, great destruction. When I look at the migration, I looked at the line, I said it actually on your show recently, where are the women? It looked like very few women. Very few children. Strong, powerful men, young and people are looking at that and they're saying what's going on?

You look at the kind of damage that two people that two people that got married, they were radicalized — they got married, they killed 15 people in actually 15 — going to be probably 16 but you look at that and you take a look — a good strong look and that's what we have. We are nineteen trillion dollars — our country's a mess and we can't let all these people come into our country and break our borders. We can't do it. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: Senator Cruz, the New York Times is reporting that you failed to properly disclose a million dollars in loans from Goldman Sachs and CitiBank. During your senate race, your campaign said, "it was inadvertent." A million dollars is inadvertent?

CRUZ: Well Maria, thank you for passing on that hit piece in the front page of the New York Times. You know the nice thing about the mainstream media, they don't hide their views. The New York Times a few weeks back had a columnist who wrote a column saying, "Anybody But Cruz." Had that actually — that same columnist wrote a column comparing me to an evil demonic spirit from the movie, "It Follows" that jumps apparently from body to body possessing people.

So you know the New York Times and I don't have exactly have the warmest of relationships. Now in terms of their really stunning hit piece, what they mentioned is when I was running for senate — unlike Hillary Clinton, I don't have masses of money in the bank, hundreds of millions of dollars. When I was running for senate just about every lobbyist, just about all of the establishment opposed me in the senate race in Texas and my opponent in that race was worth over 200 million dollars. He put a 25 million dollar check up from his own pocket to fund that campaign and my wife Heidi and I, we ended up investing everything we owned.

We took a loan against our assets to invest it in that campaign to defend ourselves against those attacks. And the entire New York times attack — is that I disclosed that loan on one filing with the United States Senate, that was a public filing. But it was not on a second filing with FDIC and yes, I made a paperwork error disclosing it on one piece of paper instead of the other. But if that's the best the New York Times has got, they better go back to the well.

BARTIROMO: Thank you.

[*commercial break*]

CAVUTO: All right. Welcome back to the Republican presidential , right here in North Charleston, South Carolina. Let's get right back to the questions. And I'll start with you, Senator Cruz.

Now you are, of course, a strict constitutionalist — no one would doubt that. And as you know, the U.S. Constitution says only natural-born citizens are eligible for the office of president of the United States. Stop me if you've heard this before. Now, you were born...[*laughter*]... you were born in Canada to an American mother. So you were and are considered an American citizen. But that fellow next to you, Donald Trump — and others — have said that being born in Canada means you are not natural-born, and that has raised questions about your eligibility.

Do you want to try to close this topic once and for all tonight?

CRUZ: Well, Neil, I'm glad we're focusing on the important topics of the evening. *[laughter and applause]*

You know, back in September, my friend Donald said that he had had his lawyers look at this from every which way, and there was no issue there. There was nothing to this birther issue. *[laughter]*

Now, since September, the Constitution hasn't changed. *[laughter]*

But the poll numbers have. *[applause]*

And I recognize — I recognize that Donald is dismayed that his poll numbers are falling in Iowa. But the facts and the law here are really quite clear. Under longstanding U.S. law, the child of a U.S. citizen born abroad is a natural-born citizen.

If a soldier has a child abroad, that child is a natural-born citizen. That's why John McCain, even though he was born in Panama, was eligible to run for president.

If an American missionary has a child abroad, that child is a natural-born citizen. That's why George Romney, Mitt's dad, was eligible to run for president, even though he was born in Mexico.

At the end of the day, the legal issue is quite straightforward, but I would note that the birther theories that Donald has been relying on — some of the more extreme ones insist that you must not only be born on U.S. soil, but have two parents born on U.S. soil.

Under that theory, not only would I be disqualified, Marco Rubio would be disqualified, Bobby Jindal would be disqualified and, interestingly enough, Donald J. Trump would be disqualified. *[applause]*

UNKNOWN: Not me.

CRUZ: Because — because Donald's mother was born in Scotland. She was naturalized. Now, Donald...

TRUMP: But I was born here.

CRUZ: ... on the issue — on the issue of citizenship, Donald...

TRUMP: *[inaudible]*. Big difference.

CRUZ: ... on the issue of citizenship, Donald, I'm not going to use your mother's birth against you.

TRUMP: OK, good. Because it wouldn't work.

CRUZ: You're an American, as is everybody else on this stage, and I would suggest we focus on who's best prepared to be commander-in-chief, because that's the most important question facing the country. *[applause]*

CAVUTO: Mr. Trump...*[crosstalk]*...that you raised it because of his rising poll numbers.

TRUMP: ... first of all, let me just tell you something — and you know, because you just saw the numbers yourself — NBC Wall Street Journal just came out with a poll — headline: Trump way up, Cruz going down. I mean, so don't — so you can't — you can't...*[booing]*...they don't like the Wall Street Journal. They don't like NBC, but I like the poll. *[laughter]*

And frankly, it just came out, and in Iowa now, as you know, Ted, in the last three polls, I'm beating you. So — you know, you shouldn't misrepresent how well you're doing with the polls. *[applause]*

You don't have to say that. In fact, I was all for you until you started doing that, because that's a misrepresentation, number one.

Number two, this isn't me saying it. I don't care. I think I'm going to win fair and square *[inaudible]* to win this way. Thank you.

Lawrence Tribe and *[inaudible]* from Harvard — of Harvard, said that there is a serious question as to whether or not Ted can do this. OK? There are other attorneys that feel, and very, very fine constitutional attorneys, that feel that because he was not born on the land, he cannot run for office.

Here's the problem. We're running. We're running. He does great. I win. I choose him as my vice presidential candidate, and the Democrats sue because we can't take him along for the ride. I don't like that. OK? *[laughter]*

The fact is — and if for some reason he beats the rest of the field, he beats the rest of the field [inaudible]. See, they don't like that. They don't like that. [audience booing]

No, they don't like he beats the rest of the field, because they want me. [laughter]

But — if for some reason, Neil, he beats the rest of the field, I already know the Democrats are going to be bringing a suit. You have a big lawsuit over your head while you're running. And if you become the nominee, who the hell knows if you can even serve in office? So you should go out, get a declaratory judgment, let the courts decide. And you shouldn't have mentioned the polls because I would have been much... [crosstalk]

CAVUTO: Why are you saying this now — right now? Why are you raising this issue now?

TRUMP: Because now he's going a little bit better. No, I didn't care [inaudible]. It's true. No, it's true. Hey look, he never had a chance. Now, he's doing better. He's got probably a four or five percent chance. [laughter]

[crosstalk]

CRUZ: Neil... [crosstalk]

TRUMP: The fact is, there is a big overhang. There's a big question mark on your head. And you can't do that to the party. You really can't. You can't do that to the party. You have to have certainty. Even if it was a one percent chance, and it's far greater than one percent because [inaudible].

I mean, you have great constitutional lawyers that say you can't run. If there was a — and you know I'm not bringing a suit. I promise. But the Democrats are going to bring a lawsuit, and you have to have certainty. You can't have a question. I can agree with you or not, but you can't have a question over your head.

CAVUTO: Senator, do you want to respond?

CRUZ: Well, listen, I've spent my entire life defending the Constitution before the U.S. Supreme Court. And I'll tell you, I'm not going to be taking legal advice from Donald Trump.

TRUMP: You don't have to. Take it from Lawrence Tribe. [applause] [crosstalk]

Take it from your professors... [crosstalk]

CRUZ: The chances of any litigation proceeding and succeeding on this are zero. And Mr. Trump is very focused...

TRUMP: He's wrong. He's wrong.

CRUZ: ... on Larry Tribe. Let me tell you who Larry Tribe is. He's a left-wing judicial activist, Harvard Law professor who was Al Gore's lawyer in Bush versus Gore. He's a major Hillary Clinton supporter. And there's a reason why Hillary's supporters are echoing Donald's attacks on me, because Hillary...

TRUMP: He is not the only one.

CRUZ: ... wants to face Donald Trump in the general election.

TRUMP: There are many lawyers.

CRUZ: And I'll tell you what, Donald, you — you very kindly just a moment ago offered me the V.P. slot. [laughter]

I'll tell you what. If this all works out, I'm happy to consider naming you as V.P. So if you happen to be right, you could get the top job at the end of the day.

TRUMP: No — no... [laughter]... I think if it doesn't... [applause] I like that. I like it. I'd consider it. But I think I'll go back to building buildings if it doesn't work out.

CRUZ: Actually, I'd love to get you to build a wall.

[crosstalk]

TRUMP: I have a feeling it's going to work out, actually.

[crosstalk]

RUBIO: Let me [*inaudible*]. I was invoked in that question, so let me just say — in that answer — let me say, the real question here, I hate to interrupt this episode of Court TV. [*laughter*]

But the real — but I think we have to get back to what this election has to be about. OK? Listen, we — this is the greatest country in the history of mankind. But in 2008, we elected a president that didn't want to fix America. He wants to change America. We elected a president that doesn't believe in the Constitution. He undermines it. We elected a president that is weakening America on the global stage. We elected a president that doesn't believe in the free enterprise system.

This election has to be about reversing all of that damage. That's why I'm running for office because when I become president of the United States, on my first day in office we are going to repeal every single one of his unconstitutional executive orders. When I'm president of the United States we are getting rid of Obamacare and we are rebuilding our military. And when I'm president, we're not just going to have a president that gives a State of the Union and says America is the greatest country in the world. When I'm president, we're going to have a president that acts like it.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, senator.

Mr. Trump, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley in her response to the State of the Union address... [*applause*]...appeared to choose sides within the party, saying Republicans should resist, quote, "the siren call of the angriest voices". She confirmed, she was referring to you among others. Was she out of line? And, how would a President Trump unite the party?

TRUMP: Okay. First of all, Nikki this afternoon said I'm a friend of hers. Actually a close friend. And wherever you are sitting Nikki, I'm a friend. We're friends. That's good. [*laughter*] But she did say there was anger. And I could say, oh, I'm not angry. I'm very angry because our country is being run horribly and I will gladly accept the mantle of anger. Our military is a disaster. [*applause*]

Our healthcare is a horror show. Obamacare, we're going to repeal it and replace it. We have no borders. Our vets are being treated horribly. Illegal immigration is beyond belief. Our country is being run by incompetent people. And yes, I am angry. [*applause*] And I won't be angry when we fix it, but until we fix it, I'm very, very angry. And I say that to Nikki. So when Nikki said that, I wasn't offended. She said the truth.

One of your colleagues interviewed me. And said, well, she said you were angry and I said to myself, huh, she's right. I'm not fighting that. I didn't find it offensive at all. I'm angry because our country is a mess. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: But what are you going to do about it?

CAVUTO: Marco Rubio. I'm sorry, it's the time constraints. You and Governor Christie have been exchanging some fairly nasty words of late, and I will allow the governor to respond as well.

The governor went so far to say, you won't be able to slime your way to the White House. He's referring to a series of ads done by a PAC, speaking on your behalf, that say quote, "One high tax, Common Core, liberal, energy-loving, Obamacare, Medicaid-expanding president is enough. You think you went too far on that and do you want to apologize to the governor?"

RUBIO: You know, as I said already twice in this, we have a very serious problem in this country. [*applause*] We have a president of the United States that is undermining this country's security and expanding the role of...

CAVUTO: That is not my question.

RUBIO: Well, I am going to answer your question, Neil. He is — this president is undermining the constitutional basis of this government. This president is undermining our military. He is undermining our standing in the world. I like Chris Christie, but we can not afford to have a president of the United States that supports Common Core. [*applause*]

We can not afford to have a president of the United States that supports gun control. This president, this president is more interested in funding — less interested in funding the military, than he is in funding Planned Parenthood — he's more interested in funding Planned Parenthood than he is in funding the military.

Chris Christie wrote a check to Planned Parenthood. All I'm saying is our next president has to be someone that undoes the damage Barack Obama has done to this country. It can not be someone that agrees with his agenda.

Because the damage he has done to America is extraordinary. Let me tell you, if we don't get this election right, there may

be no turning back for America. We're on the verge of being the first generation of Americans that leave our children worse off than ourselves.

So I just truly, with all my heart belief, I like everybody on the stage. No one is a socialist. No one here is under FBI investigation. So we have a good group of people.

CAVUTO: Is he a liberal?

RUBIO: Our next president...

CAVUTO: Is he a liberal?

RUBIO: Unfortunately, Governor Christie has endorsed many of the ideas that Barack Obama supports, whether it is Common Core or gun control or the appointment of Sonia Sotomayor or the donation he made to Planned Parenthood. Our next president, and our Republican nominee can not be someone who supports those positions.

CAVUTO: Governor? *[applause]*

CHRISTIE: I stood on the stage and watched Marco in rather indignantly, look at Governor Bush and say, someone told you that because we're running for the same office, that criticizing me will get you to that office.

It appears that the same someone who has been whispering in old Marco's ear too. *[laughter]*

So the indignation that you carry on, some of the stuff, you have to also own then. So let's set the facts straight. First of all, I didn't support Sonia Sotomayor. Secondly, I never wrote a check to Planned Parenthood.

Third, if you look at my record as governor of New Jersey, I have vetoed a 50-caliber rifle ban. I have vetoed a reduction this clip size. I vetoed a statewide I.D. system for gun owners and I pardoned, six out-of-state folks who came through our state and were arrested for owning a gun legally in another state so they never have to face charges.

And on Common Core, Common Core has been eliminated in New Jersey. So listen, this is the difference between being a governor and a senator. See when you're a senator, what you get to do is just talk and talk and talk. And you talk so much that nobody can ever keep up with what you're saying is accurate or not.

When you're a governor, you're held accountable for everything you do. And the people of New Jersey, I've seen it. *[applause]*

CHRISTIE: And the last piece is this. I like Marco too, and two years ago, he called me a conservative reformer that New Jersey needed. That was before he was running against me. Now that he is, he's changed his tune.

I'm never going to change my tune. I like Marco Rubio. He's a good guy, a smart guy, and he would be a heck of a lot better president than Hillary Rodham Clinton would ever be. *[applause]*

BUSH: Neil, my name was mentioned here. Neil, my name was mentioned as well.

Here's the deal, Chris is totally right. He's been a good governor, and he's a heck of a lot better than his predecessor that would have bankrupted New Jersey.

Everybody on this stage is better than Hillary Clinton. And I think the focus ought to be on making sure that we leave this nomination process, as wild and woolly as it's going to be — this is not being bad.

These attack ads are going to be part of life. Everybody just needs to get used to it. Everybody's record's going to be scrutinized, and at the end of the day we need to unite behind the winner so we can defeat Hillary Clinton, because she is a disaster. *[applause]*

Our country rise up again, but we need to have a compelling conservative agenda that we present to the American people in a way that doesn't disparage people, that unites us around our common purpose.

And so everybody needs to discount some of the things you're going to hear in these ads, and discount the — the back-and-forth here, because every person here is better than Hillary Clinton.

CARSON: Neil, I was mentioned too.

CAVUTO: You were?

CARSON: Yeah, he said everybody. *[laughter]*

And — and I just want to take this opportunity to say, you know, in the 2012 election, you know, we — and when I say we, Republicans — tore themselves apart.

You know, we have to stop this because, you know, if we manage to damage ourselves, and we lose the next election, and a progressive gets in there and they get two or three Supreme Court picks, this nation is over as we know it. And we got to look at the big picture here.

BARTIROMO: Governor Kasich...*[applause]*... Governor Kasich, Hillary Clinton is getting some serious competition from Senator Bernie Sanders. He's now at 41 percent in the latest CBS/New York Times poll. Vice President Biden sang his praises, saying Bernie is speaking to a yearning that is deep and real, and he has credibility on it.

So what does it say about our country that a candidate who is a self-avowed socialist and who doesn't think a 90 percent tax rate is too high could be the Democratic nominee?

KASICH: Well, if that's the case, we're going to win every state, if Bernie Sanders is the nominee. That's not even an issue. But look...*[applause]*...and I know Bernie, and I can promise you he's not going to be president of the United States. So here's this — the situation, I think, Maria.

And this is what we have to — I — I've got to tell you, when wages don't rise — and they haven't for a lot of families for a number of years — it's very, very difficult for them.

Part of the reason why it hasn't risen because sometimes we're not giving people the skills they need. Sometimes it's because the Federal Reserve kept interest rates so low that the wealthy were able to invest in — in strong assets like the stock market when everybody else was left behind.

People are upset about it. I'll tell you what else they're upset about: you're 50 or 51 years old, and some kid walks in and tells you you're out of work, and you don't know where to go and where to turn. Do we have answer for that? We do. There are ways to retrain the 50 and 51-year-olds, because they've got great value.

I'll tell you what else people are concerned about. Their kids come out of college, they have high debt and they can't get a good job. We got to do a lot about the high cost of high — higher education, but we've got to make sure we're training people for jobs that exist, that are good jobs that can pay. *[applause]*

Let me tell you that, in this country — in this country, people are concerned about their economic future. They're very concerned about it. And they wonder whether somebody is getting something to — keeping them from getting it.

That's not the America that I've ever known. My father used to say, "Johnny, we never — we don't hate the rich. We just want to be the rich." And we just got to make sure that every American has the tools, in K-through-12 and in vocational education, in higher education.

And we got to fight like crazy so people can think the American dream still exists, because it does, with rising wages, with full employment and with everybody in America — and I mean everybody in America — having an opportunity to realize the American dream of having a better life than their mother and their father.

I'm president — look, I've done it once. I've done it once in Washington, with great jobs and lower taxes. The economy was really booming.

And now in Ohio, with the same formula, wages higher than the — than the national average. A growth of 385,000 jobs.

[bell rings]

It's not that hard. Just know where you want to go, stick to your guts. Get it done, because our — our children and grandchildren are counting on us to get it done. And, folks, we will. You count on it.

BARTIROMO: Dr. Carson, one of the other candidates on this stage has brought Bill Clinton's past indiscretions. Is that a legitimate topic in this election? And what do you think of the notion that Hillary Clinton is an enabler of sexual misconduct?

CARSON: Well, there's not question that we should be able to look at past president whether they're married to somebody who's running for president or not in terms of their past behavior and what it means. But you know, here's the

real issue, is this America anymore? Do we still have standards? Do we still have values and principles?

You know, you look at what's going on, you see all the divisiveness and the hatred that goes on in our society. You know, we have a war on virtual everything — race wars, gender wars, income wars, religious wars, age wars. Every war you can imagine, we have people at each other's throat and our strength is actually in our unity.

You know, you go to the internet, you start reading an article and you go to the comments section — you cannot go five comments down before people are calling each all manner of names. Where did that spirit come from in America? It did not come from our Judeo-Christian roots, I can tell you that. And wherever it came from we need to start once again recognizing that there is such a thing as right and wrong. And let's not let the secular progressives drive that out of us.

The majority of people in American actually have values and principles and they believe in the very things that made America great. They've been beaten into submission. It's time for us to stand up for what we believe in. *[applause]*

CAVUTO: Well, we are not done. Coming up, one of the top things people are talking about on Facebook, guns. And you can join us live us on this stage in the conversation during this commercial break right from home. You can go to Facebook.com/*[inaudible]*. We will be streaming live and talking about how we think the is going so far.

We're back in a moment in Charleston, South Carolina.

[commercial break]

BARTIROMO: Welcome back to the Republican presidential debates, right here in North Charleston. Let's get right back to the questions.

Governor Bush, gun rights, one of the top issues seen on Facebook with close to 3 million people talking about it in the past month. Right here in Charleston, Dylann Roof, who has been accused of killing nine people in a nearby church, reportedly had not passed his background check when he got his gun. What is the harm in tightening standards for not only who buys guns, but those who sell them?

BUSH: First of all, I'd like to recognize Governor Haley for her incredible leadership in the aftermath of the — *[applause]* — the Emanuel AME church killings. And I also want to recognize the people in that church that showed the grace of God and the grace of forgiveness and the mercy that they showed. *[applause]* I don't know if any of us could have done what they did, one after another, within 48 hours of that tragedy taking place. Look, here's the deal, in this particular case, the FBI made a mistake. The law itself requires a background check, but that didn't fulfill their part of the bargain within the time that they were supposed to do.

We don't need to add new rules, we need to make sure the FBI does its job. Because that person should not have gotten a gun, should not — would not have passed a background check. The first impulse of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton is to take rights away from law-abiding citizens.

That's what they do, whether it's the San Bernardino attack or if it's these tragedies that take place, I think we need to focus on what the bigger issue is. It isn't law-abiding gun owners.

Look, I have an A plus rating in the NRA and we also have a reduction in gun violence because in Florida, if you commit a crime with a gun, you're going away. You're going away for a long, long while.

And that's what we should focus on is the violence in our communities. Target the efforts for people that are committing crimes with guns, and if you do that, and get it right, you're going to be much better off than creating a political argument where there's a big divide.

The other issue is mental health. That's a serious issue that we could work on. Republicans and Democrats alike believe this. *[applause]* The president's first impulse is do this by executive order, power he doesn't have. Why not go to Congress and in a bipartisan way, begin to deal with the process of mental health issues so that people that are spiraling out of control because of mental health challenges don't have access to guns. *[applause]*

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Trump, are there any circumstances that you think we should be limiting gun sales of any kind in America?

TRUMP: No. I am a 2nd amendment person. If we had guns in California on the other side where the bullets went in the different direction, you wouldn't have 14 or 15 people dead right now.

If even in Paris, if they had guns on the other side, going in the opposite direction, you wouldn't have 130 people plus dead. So the answer is no and what Jeb said is absolutely correct.

We have a huge mental health problem in this country. We're closing hospitals, we're closing wards, we're closing so many because the states want to save money. We have to get back into looking at what's causing it. The guns don't pull the trigger. It's the people that pull the trigger and we have to find out what is going on. [applause]

We have to protect our 2nd amendment and you cannot do this and certainly what Barack Obama was doing with the executive order. He doesn't want to get people together, the old-fashioned way, where you get Congress. You get the Congress, you get the Senate, you get together, you do legislation. He just writes out an executive order. Not supposed to happen that way. [applause]

BARTIROMO: Thank you sir.

TRUMP: You get the Congress. You get the Senate. You get together. You do legislation. He just writes out an order, executive order. It's not supposed to happen that way. [applause]

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir. [applause]

CAVUTO: Senator Rubio, you said that President Obama wants to take people's guns away. Yet under his presidency, gun sales have more than doubled. That doesn't sound like a White House unfriendly to gun owners.

RUBIO: That sounds like people are afraid the president's going to take their guns away. [applause]

Look, the Second Amendment is not an option. It is not a suggestion. It is a constitutional right of every American to be able to protect themselves and their families. I am convinced that if this president could confiscate every gun in America, he would. I am convinced that this president, if he could get rid of the Second Amendment, he would. I am convinced because I see how he works with his attorney general, not to defend the Second Amendment, but to figure out ways to undermine it.

I have seen him appoint people to our courts not to defend the Second Amendment, but to figure out ways to undermine it.

Here's my second problem. None of these instances that the president points to as the reason why he's doing these things would have been preventive. You know why? Because criminals don't buy their guns from a gun show. They don't buy their guns from a collector. And they don't buy their guns from a gun store. They get — they steal them. They get them on the black market.

And let me tell you, ISIS and terrorists do not get their guns from a gun show. These...[laughter and applause]... his answer — you name it. If there's an act of violence in America, his immediate answer before he even knows the facts is gun control. Here's a fact. We are in a war against ISIS. They are trying to attack us here in America. They attacked us in Philadelphia last week. They attacked us in San Bernardino two weeks ago. And the last line standing between them and our families might be us and a gun.

When I'm president of the United States, we are defending the Second Amendment, not undermining it the way Barack Obama does. [applause]

CAVUTO: But what fact can you point to, Senator — what fact can you point to that the president would take away everyone's gun? You don't think that's [inaudible]?

RUBIO: About every two weeks, he holds a press conference talking about how he can't wait to restrict people's access to guns. He has never defended...[crosstalk]...I'll give you a fact. Well, let me tell you this. Do you remember when he ran for president of the United States, and he was a candidate, and he went and said, "These Americans with traditional values, they are bitter people, and they cling to their guns and to their religion." That tells you right away where he was headed on all of this.

This president every chance he has ever gotten has tried to undermine the Second Amendment. [applause]

He doesn't meet — here's the difference. When he meets with the attorney general in the White House, it's not "how can we protect the Second Amendment rights of Americans." It's "give me options on how I can make it harder for law-abiding people to buy guns." That will never happen when I am president of the United States. [applause]

CAVUTO: Governor Christie, you, too, have criticized the president's recent executive action on gun control, saying it's unconstitutional, another step to bypass Congress. But hasn't your own position on guns evolved, sir? The New Jersey Star-Ledger reports that you signed several laws to regulate the possession of firearms, and that you argued back in August 2013, and I quote, "These common sense measures will strengthen New Jersey's already tough gun laws."

So isn't that kind of what the president wants to do now?

CHRISTIE: No, absolutely not. The president wants to do things without working with his Congress, without working with the legislature, and without getting the consent of the American people. And the fact is that that's not a democracy. That's a dictatorship. And we need to very, very concerned about that.

See, here's the thing. I don't think the founders put the Second Amendment as number two by accident. I don't think they dropped all the amendments into a hat and picked them out of a hat. I think they made the Second Amendment the second amendment because they thought it was just that important.

The fact is in New Jersey, what we have done is to make it easier now to get a conceal and carry permit. We have made it easier to do that, not harder. And the way we've done it properly through regulatory action, not by signing unconstitutional executive orders. This guy is a petulant child. That's what he is. I mean, you know...[*applause*]... the fact is, Neil, let's think about — let's think about — and I want to maybe — I hope the president is watching tonight, because here's what I'd like to tell him.

Mr. President, we're not against you. We're against your policies. When you became president, you had a Democratic Congress and a filibuster-proof Democratic Senate. You had only 21 Republican governors in this country. And now after seven years of your policies, we have the biggest majority we've had since the 1920s in the House; a Republican majority in the Senate; and 31 out of 50 Republican governors.

The American people have rejected your agenda and now you're trying to go around it. That's not right. It's not constitutional. And we are going to kick your rear end out of the White House come this fall. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: So what is the answer, Senator Cruz, to stop mass shootings and violent crime, up in 30 cities across the country?

CRUZ: The answer is simple. You prosecute criminals. You target the bad guys. You know, a minute ago, Neil asked: What has President Obama do — done to illustrate that he wants to go after guns?

Well, he appointed Eric Holder as attorney general. Eric Holder said he viewed his mission as brainwashing the American people against guns. He appointed Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court, someone who has been a radical against the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms.

He launched Fast and Furious, illegally selling guns to Mexican drug lords that were then used to shoot law enforcement officials. And I'll tell you what Hillary Clinton has said: Hillary Clinton says she agrees with the dissenters — the Supreme Court dissenters in the Heller case.

There were four dissenters, and they said that they believe the Second Amendment protects no individual right to keep and bear arms whatsoever, which means, if their view prevailed and the next president's going to get one, two, three, maybe four Supreme Court justices, the court will rule that not a single person in this room has any right under the Second Amendment and the government could confiscate your guns.

And I'll note that California senator — Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein said, if she could say to Mr. America and Mrs. America, "give me your guns, I'm rounding them up," she would.

And let me make a final point on this. Listen, in any Republican primary, everyone is going to say they support the Second Amendment. Unless you are clinically insane...[*laughter*]...that's what you say in a primary. But the voters are savvier than that. They recognize that people's actions don't always match their words. I've got a proven record fighting to defend the Second Amendment.

There's a reason Gun Owners of America has endorsed me in this race. There's a reason the NRA gave me their Carter Knight Freedom Fund award...[*bell rings*]...and there's a reason, when Barack Obama and Chuck Schumer came after our right to keep and bear arms, that I led the opposition, along with millions of Americans — we defeated that gun control legislation.

And I would note the other individuals on this stage were nowhere to be found in that fight.

BARTIROMO: Senator...[*applause*]... let me follow up and switch gears. Senator Cruz, you suggested Mr. Trump, quote, "embodies New York values." Could you explain what you mean by that?

CRUZ: You know, I think most people know exactly what New York values are. [*laughter*]

BARTIROMO: I am from New York. I don't.

CRUZ: What — what — you're from New York? So you might not. [*laughter*]

But I promise you, in the state of South Carolina, they do. [*applause*]

And listen, there are many, many wonderful, wonderful working men and women in the state of New York. But everyone understands that the values in New York City are socially liberal or pro-abortion or pro- gay-marriage, focus around money and the media.

And — and I would note indeed, the reason I said that is I was asked — my friend Donald has taken to it as advance playing Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA", and I was asked what I thought of that.

And I said, "well, if he wanted to play a song, maybe he could play, 'New York, New York?'" And — and — you know, the concept of New York values is not that complicated to figure out.

Not too many years ago, Donald did a long interview with Tim Russert. And in that interview, he explained his views on a whole host of issues that were very, very different from the views he's describing now.

And his explanation — he said, "look, I'm from New York, that's what we believe in New York. Those aren't Iowa values, but this is what we believe in New York." And so that was his explanation.

And — and I guess I can — can frame it another way. Not a lot of conservatives come out of Manhattan. I'm just saying. [*laughter*]

BARTIROMO: Are you sure about that?

CAVUTO: Maria...

TRUMP: So conservatives actually do come out of Manhattan, including William F. Buckley and others, just so you understand. [*applause*]

And just so — if I could, because he insulted a lot of people. I've had more calls on that statement that Ted made — New York is a great place. It's got great people, it's got loving people, wonderful people.

When the World Trade Center came down, I saw something that no place on Earth could have handled more beautifully, more humanely than New York. You had two one hundred... [*applause*] ...you had two 110-story buildings come crashing down. I saw them come down. Thousands of people killed, and the cleanup started the next day, and it was the most horrific cleanup, probably in the history of doing this, and in construction. I was down there, and I've never seen anything like it.

And the people in New York fought and fought and fought, and we saw more death, and even the smell of death — nobody understood it. And it was with us for months, the smell, the air.

And we rebuilt downtown Manhattan, and everybody in the world watched and everybody in the world loved New York and loved New Yorkers. And I have to tell you, that was a very insulting statement that Ted made. [*applause*]

CAVUTO: Governor bush, for the third time in as many months, the Iranians have provoked us, detaining us, as we've been discussing, with these 10 Navy sailors Tehran had said strayed into their waters. The sailors were released, but only after shown on video apologizing for the incident. This occurring only weeks after Iran fired multiple rockets within 1,500 yards of a U.S. aircraft carrier and then continued to test medium range missiles.

Now you've claimed that such actions indicate Tehran has little to fear from a President Obama. I wonder, sir, what would change if they continued doing this sort of thing under a President Jeb Bush?

BUSH: Well, first of all, under President Jeb Bush, we would restore the strength of the military. Last week, Secretary

Carter announced that the Navy's going to be cut again. It's now half the size of what it was prior to Operation Desert Storm.

The deployments are too high for the military personnel. We don't have procurement being done for refreshing the equipment. The B-52 is still operational as the long range bomber; it was inaugurated in the age of Harry Truman. The planes are older than the pilots. We're gutting our military, and so the Iranians and the Chinese and the Russians and many other countries look at the United States not as serious as we once were.

We have to eliminate the sequester, rebuild our military in a way that makes it clear that we're back in the game.

Secondly, as it relates to Iran, we need to confront their ambitions across the board. We should reimpose sanctions, they've already violated sanctions after this agreement was signed by testing medium-range missiles.

Thirdly, we need to move our embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to send a serious signal that we're back in the game with Israel...[*applause*]...and sign an agreement that makes sure that the world knows that they will have technological superiority.

We need to get back in the game as it relates to our Arab nations. The rest of the world is moving away from us towards other alliances because we are weak. This president and John Kerry and Hillary Clinton all have made it harder for the next president to act, but he must act to confront the ambitions of Iran. We can get back in the game to restore order and security for our own country. [*applause*]

CAVUTO: Thank you, Governor. Governor Kasich, while everyone has been focusing on Iran's provocations, I'm wondering what you make of what Saudi Arabia has been doing and its recent moves in the region, including its execution of a well-known Shi'ite cleric and its move to dramatically increase oil production, some say in an effort to drive down oil prices and force a lot of U.S. oil producers out of business.

Sure enough, oil prices have tumbled. One brokerage house is predicting a third or more of American oil producers and those heavily invested in fracking will go bankrupt, and soon Saudi Arabia and OPEC will be back in the driver's seat. U.S. energy player Harold Hamrie similarly told me with friends like these, who needs enemies? Do you agree?

KASICH: Well, let me — let me first of all talk a little bit about my experience. I served on the Defense Committee for 18 years, and by the way, one of the members of that committee was Senator Strom Thurmond from South Carolina. Let me also tell you...[*applause*]...that after the 9/11 attacks, Secretary Rumsfeld invited me to the Pentagon with a meeting of the former secretaries of Defense. And in that meeting, I suggested we had a problem with technology, and that I wanted to take people from Silicon Valley into the Pentagon to solve our most significant problems. So I not only had the opportunity to go through the Cold War struggles in Central America, and even after 9/11 to be involved.

With Saudi Arabia and oil production, first of all, it's so critical for us to be energy independent, and we're getting there because of fracking and we ought to explore because, see, energy independence gives us leverage and flexibility, and secondly, if you want to bring jobs back to the United States of America in industry, low prices make the difference.

We're seeing it in my state and we'll see it in this country. And that's why we must make sure we continue to frack.

In terms of Saudi Arabia, look, my biggest problem with them is they're funding radical clerics through their madrasses. That is a bad deal and an evil situation, and presidents have looked the other way. And I was going to tell you, whether I'm president or not, we better make it clear to the Saudis that we're going to support you, we're in relation with you just like we were in the first Gulf War, but you've got to knock off the funding and teaching of radical clerics who are the very people who try to destroy us and will turn around and destroy them. [*applause*]

So look, in foreign policy — in foreign policy, it's strength, but you've got to be cool. You've got to have a clear vision of where you want to go. And I'm going to tell you, that it — I'm going to suggest to you here tonight, that you can't do on the job training.

I've seen so much of it — a Soviet Union, the coming down of a wall, the issues that we saw around the world in Central America, the potential spread of communism, and 9/11 and Gulf War. You see what the Saudi's — deliver them a strong message but at the end of the day we have to keep our cool because most of the time they're going right with us. And they must be part of our coalition to destroy ISIS and I believe we can get that done.

Thank you.

CAVUTO: Thank you John.

BARTIROMO: There's much more ahead including the fight against ISIS. More from Charleston, South Carolina when we come right back.

[*commercial break*]

BARTIROMO: We welcome back to the Republican Presidential , right back to the questions.

Candidates, the man who made fighting ISIS the cornerstone of his campaign, South Carolina Senator, Lindsey Graham is out the race but he joins us tonight in the audience. [*applause*]

He says, "the air-strike now in their 16th month have been ineffective." Dr. Carson ...

CARSON: Wait a minute, who in their 16th month?

BARTIROMO: The air-strikes.

CARSON: OK.

BARTIROMO: Now in their 16th month are ineffective. Dr. Carson, do you think Senator Graham is right in wanting to send 20,000 troops — ground troops to Iraq and Syria to take out ISIS?

CARSON: Well, there's no question that ISIS is a very serious problem, and I don't believe that this administration recognizes how serious it is.

I think we need to do a lot more than we're doing. Recognize that the caliphate is what gives them the legitimacy to go out on a jihadist mission, so we need to take that away from them.

The way to take that away from them is to talk to our military officials and ask them, "what do you need in order to accomplish this goal?"

Our decision is, then, do we give them what we need. I say, yes, not only do we give them what they need, but we don't tie their hands behind their backs so that they can go ahead and get the job done.

In addition to that... [*applause*]...in addition to that, we go ahead and we take the oil from them, their source of revenue. You know, some of these — these engagement rules that the administration has — "we're not going to bomb a tanker that's coming out of there because there might be a person in it" — give me a break.

Just tell them that, you put people in there, we're going to bomb them. So don't put people in there if you don't want them bombed. You know, that's so simple. [*applause*]

And then we need to shut down — we need to shut down their mechanisms of funding and attack their command-and-control centers. Why should we let their people be sitting there smoking their cigars, sitting in their comfortable chairs in Raqqa?

We know to go ahead and shut off the supply routes, and send in our special ops at 2:00 a.m. and attack them everywhere they go. They should be running all the time, then they won't have time to plan attacks against us. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir. Senator Graham has also said that the U.S. will find Arab support for its coalition if it removes Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. And I quote, "The now king of Saudi Arabia told us, 'you can have our army, you just got to deal with Assad.'"

"The emir of Qatar said, 'I'll pay for the operation, but they are not going to fight ISIS and let Damascus fall into the hands of the Iranians. Assad has to go.'"

Governor Christie, how important is it to remove Assad from power and how would you do it?

CHRISTIE: Maria, you look at what this president and his secretary of state, Secretary of State Clinton, has done to get us in this spot. You think about it — this is the president who said, along with his secretary of state — drew a red line in Syria, said, if Assad uses chemical weapons against his people, that we're going to attack.

He used chemical weapons, he's killed, now, over a quarter of a million of his own people, and this president has done nothing. In fact, he's done worse than nothing.

This president — and, by the way, Secretary Clinton, who called Assad a reformer — she called Assad a reformer. Now, the fact is, what this president has done is invited Russia to play an even bigger role, bring in Vladimir Putin to negotiate getting those chemical weapons back from Assad, yet what do we have today?

We have the Russians and the Iranians working together, not to fight ISIS, but to prop up Assad. The fact of the matter is we're not going to have peace — we are not going to have peace in Syria. We're not going to be able to rebuild it unless we put a no-fly zone there, make it safe for those folks so we don't have to be talking about Syrian refugees anymore.

The Syrians should stay in Syria. They shouldn't be going to Europe. And here's the last piece...[*applause*]...you're not going to have peace in Syria with Assad in charge. You're simply not. And so Senator Graham is right about this.

And if we want to try to rebuild the coalition, as Governor Kasich was saying before, then what we better do is to get to the Arab countries that believe that ISIS is a threat, not only to them, but to us and to world peace, and bring them together.

And believe me, Assad is not worth it. And if you're going to leave this to Hillary Clinton, the person who gave us this foreign policy, the architect of it, and you're going to give her another four years, that's why I'm speaking out as strongly as I am about that.

Hillary Clinton cannot be president. It will lead to even greater war in this world. And remember this, after Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have had nearly 8 years, we have fewer democracies in the world than we had when they started.

That makes the world less peaceful, less safe. In my administration, we will help to make sure we bring people together in the Middle East, and we will fight ISIS and defeat them.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir. [*applause*]

Mr. Trump — Mr. Trump, your comments about banning Muslims from entering the country created a firestorm. According to Facebook, it was the most-talked-about moment online of your entire campaign, with more than 10 million people talking about the issue.

Is there anything you've heard that makes you want to rethink this position?

TRUMP: No. [*laughter*] No. [*applause*]

Look, we have to stop with political correctness. We have to get down to creating a country that's not going to have the kind of problems that we've had with people flying planes into the World Trade Centers, with the — with the shootings in California, with all the problems all over the world.

I just left Indonesia — bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb.

We have to find out what's going on. I said temporarily. I didn't say permanently. I said temporarily. And I have many great Muslim friends. And some of them, I will say, not all, have called me and said, "Donald, thank you very much; you're exposing an unbelievable problem and we have to get to the bottom of it."

And unlike President Obama, where he refuses even to use the term of what's going on, he can't use the term for whatever reason. And if you can't use the term, you're never going to solve the problem. My Muslim friends, some, said, "thank you very much; we'll get to the bottom of it."

But we have a serious problem. And we can't be the stupid country any more. We're laughed at all over the world. [*applause*]

BUSH: Donald, Donald — can I — I hope you reconsider this, because this policy is a policy that makes it impossible to build the coalition necessary to take out ISIS. The Kurds are our strongest allies. They're Muslim. You're not going to even allow them to come to our country?

The other Arab countries have a role to play in this. We cannot be the world's policeman. We can't do this unilaterally. We have to do this in unison with the Arab world. And sending that signal makes it impossible for us to be serious about taking out ISIS and restoring democracy in Syria. [*applause*]

So I hope you'll reconsider. I hope you'll reconsider. The better way of dealing with this — the better way of dealing with this is recognizing that there are people in, you know, the — Islamic terrorists inside, embedded in refugee populations.

What we ought to do is tighten up our efforts to deal with the entry visa program so that a citizen from Europe, it's harder if they've been traveling to Syria or traveling to these other places where there is Islamic terrorism, make it harder — make the screening take place.

We don't have to have refugees come to our country, but all Muslims, seriously? What kind of signal does that send to the rest of the world that the United States is a serious player in creating peace and security?

CAVUTO: But you said — you said that he made those comments and they represented him being unhinged after he made them.

BUSH: Yeah, they are unhinged.

CAVUTO: Well — well, after he made them...[*applause*]...his poll numbers went up eight points in South Carolina. Now — now, wait...

TRUMP: Eleven points, to be exact.

CAVUTO: Are you — are you saying — are you saying that all those people who agree with Mr. Trump are unhinged?

BUSH: No, not at all, absolutely not. I can see why people are angry and scared, because this president has created a condition where our national security has weakened dramatically. I totally get that. But we're running for the presidency of the United States here. This isn't — this isn't, you know, a different kind of job. You have to lead. You cannot make rash statements and expect the rest of the world to respond as though, well, it's just politics.

Every time we send signals like this, we send a signal of weakness, not strength. And so it was [*inaudible*] his statement, which is why I'm asking him to consider changing his views. [*applause*]

TRUMP: I want security for this country. OK? [*applause*]

I want security. I'm tired of seeing what's going on, between the border where the people flow over; people come in; they live; they shoot. I want security for this country. We have a serious problem with, as you know, with radical Islam. We have a tremendous problem. It's not only a problem here. It's a problem all over the world.

I want to find out why those two young people — those two horrible young people in California when they shot the 14 people, killed them — people they knew, people that held the wedding reception for them. I want to find out — many people saw pipe bombs and all sorts of things all over their apartment. Why weren't they vigilant? Why didn't they call? Why didn't they call the police?

And by the way, the police are the most mistreated people in this country. I will tell you that. [*applause*]

The most mistreated people. In fact, we need to — wait a minute — we need vigilance. We have to find out — many people knew about what was going on. Why didn't they turn those two people in so that you wouldn't have had all the death?

There's something going on and it's bad. And I'm saying we have to get to the bottom of it. That's all I'm saying. We need security.

BARTIROMO: We — we want to hear from all of you on this. According to Pew Research, the U.S. admits more than 100,000 Muslim immigrants every single year on a permanent lifetime basis. I want to ask the rest of you to comment on this. Do you agree that we should pause Muslim immigration until we get a better handle on our homeland security situation, as Mr. Trump has said?

Beginning with you, Governor Kasich.

KASICH: I — I've been for pausing on admitting the Syrian refugees. And the reasons why I've done is I don't believe we have a good process of being able to vet them. But you know, we don't want to put everybody in the same category.

And I'll go back to something that had been mentioned just a few minutes ago. If we're going to have a coalition, we're going to have to have a coalition not just of people in the western part of the world, our European allies, but we need the Saudis, we need the Egyptians, we need the Jordanians, we need the Gulf states. We need Jordan.

We need all of them to be part of exactly what the first George Bush put together in the first Gulf War.

[*bell rings*]

It was a coalition made up of Arabs and Americans and westerners and we're going to need it again. And if we try to put everybody in the same — call everybody the same thing, we can't do it. And that's just not acceptable.

But I think a pause on Syrian refugees has been exactly right for all the governors that have called for it, and also, of course, for me as the governor of Ohio.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir, we want to hear from the rest of you,

Governor Christie, your take.

CHRISTIE: Now Maria, listen. I said right from the beginning that we should take no Syrian refugees of any kind. And the reason I said that is because the FBI director told the American people, told Congress, that he could not guarantee he could vet them and it would be safe. That's the end of the conversation.

I can tell you, after spending seven years as a former federal prosecutor, right after 9/11, dealing with this issue. Here's the way you need to deal with it. You can't just ban all Muslims. You have to ban radical Islamic jihadists. You have to ban the people who are trying to hurt us.

The only way to figure that out is to go back to getting the intelligence community the funding and the tools that it needs to be able to keep America safe.

[*bell rings*]

And this summer, we didn't do that. We took it away from the NSA, it was a bad decision by the president. Bad by those in the Senate who voted for it and if I'm president, we'll make our intelligence community strong, and won't have to keep everybody out, we're just going to keep the bad folk out and make sure they don't harm us.

BARTIROMO: Senator Rubio, where do you stand?

RUBIO: Well, first of all, let's understand why we are even having this and why Donald tapped in to some of that anger that's out there about this whole issue. Because this president has consistently underestimated the threat of ISIS.

If you listen to the State of the Union the other night, he described them as a bunch of guys with long beards on the back of a pickup truck. They are much more than that. This is a group of people that enslaves women and sells them, sells them as brides.

This is a group of people that burns people in cages, that is conducting genocide against Christians and Yazidis and others in the region. This is not some small scale group.

They are radicalizing people in the United States, they are conducting attacks around the world. So you know what needs to happen, it's a very simple equation, and it's going to happen when I'm president. If we do not know who you are, and we do not know why you are coming when I am president, you are not getting into the United States of America.

[*applause*]

BARTIROMO: Senator Cruz, where do you stand? Senator Cruz?

CRUZ: You know I understand why Donald made the comments he did and I understand why Americans are feeling frustrated and scared and angry when we have a president who refuses to acknowledge the threat we face and even worse, who acts as an apologist for radical Islamic terrorism.

I think what we need is a commander in chief who is focused like a laser on keeping this country safe and on defeating radical Islamic terrorism. What should we do? First, we should pass the Expatriate Terrorist Act, legislation I've introduced that says if an American goes and joins ISIS and wages jihad against America, that you forfeit your citizenship and you can not come in on a passport. [*applause*]

And secondly, we should pass the legislation that I've introduced...[*bell rings*]...that suspends all refugees from nations that ISIS or Al Qaida controls significant territory. Just last week, we see saw two Iraqi refugees vetted using the same process the president says will work, that were arrested for being alleged ISIS terrorists.

If I'm elected president, we will not let in refugees from countries controlled by ISIS or Al Qaida. When it comes to ISIS, we will not weaken them, we will not degrade them, we will utterly and completely destroy ISIS [*applause*].

BARTIROMO: Dr. Carson, where do you stand? Do you agree with Mr. Trump?

CARSON: Well, first of all, recognize it is a substantial problem. But like all of our problems, there isn't a single one that can't be solved with common sense if you remove the ego and the politics. And clearly, what we need to do is get a group of experts together, including people from other countries, some of our friends from Israel, who have had experience screening these people and come up with new guidelines for immigration, and for visas, for people who are coming into this country.

That is the thing that obviously makes sense, we can do that. And as far as the Syrians are concerned, Al-Hasakah province, perfect place. They have infrastructure. All we need to do is protect them, they will be in their own country.

And that is what they told me when I was in Jordan in November. Let's listen to them and let's not listen to our politicians.

BARTIROMO: So, to be clear, the both of you do not agree with Mr. Trump?

BUSH: So, are we going to ban Muslims from India, from Indonesia, from countries that are strong allies — that we need to build better relationships with? Of course not. What we need to do is destroy ISIS.

I laid out a plan at the Citadel to do just that and it starts with creating a "No Fly Zone" and "Safe Zones" to make sure refugees are there. We need to lead a force, a Sunni led force inside of Syria. We need to embed with — with the Iraqi military. We need to arm the Kurds the directly. We need to re-establish the relationships with the Sunnis.

We need the lawyers off the back of the war fighters. That's how you solve the problem. You don't solve it by big talk where you're banning all Muslims and making it harder for us to build the kind of coalition for us to be successful.

BARTIROMO: Thank you governor.

CAVUTO: Mr. Trump, sometimes maybe in the heat of the campaign, you say things and you have to dial them back. Last week, the New York Times editorial board quoted as saying that you would oppose, "up to 45 percent tariff on Chinese goods."

TRUMP: That's wrong. They were wrong. It's the New York Times, they are always wrong.

CAVUTO: Well...

TRUMP: They were wrong.

CAVUTO: You never said because they provided that...

TRUMP: No, I said, "I would use —" they were asking me what to do about North Korea. China, they don't like to tell us but they have total control — just about, of North Korea. They can solve the problem of North Korea if they wanted to but they taunt us.

They say, "well, we don't really have control." Without China, North Korea doesn't even eat. China is ripping us on trade. They're devaluing their currency and they're killing our companies. Thousands of thousands — you look at the number of companies and the number in terms of manufacturing of plans that we've lost — 50,000 because of China.

[*crosstalk*]

CAVUTO: So they've never said to put a tariff on their...

TRUMP: We've lost anywhere between four and seven million jobs because of China. What I said then was, "we have very unfair trade with China. We're going to have a trade deficit of 505 billion dollars this year with China." A lot of that is because they devalue their currency.

What I said to the New York Times, is that, "we have great power, economic power over China and if we wanted to use that and the amount — where the 45 percent comes in, that would be the amount they saw their devaluations that we should get." That we should get.

What I'm saying is this, I'm saying that we do it but if they don't start treating us fairly and stop devaluing and let their currency rise so that our companies can compete and we don't lose all of these millions of jobs that we're losing, I would certainly start taxing goods that come in from China. Who the hell has to lose 505 billion dollars a year?

CAVUTO: I'm sorry, you lost me.

TRUMP: It's not that complicated actually.

CAVUTO: Then I apologize. Then I want to understand, if you don't want a 45 percent tariff, say that wasn't the figure, would you be open — are you open to slapping a higher tariff on Chinese goods of any sort to go back at them?

TRUMP: OK, just so you understand — I know so much about trading about with China. Carl Icahn today as you know endorsed. Many businessmen want to endorse me.

CAVUTO: I know...

TRUMP: Carl said, "no, no — " but he's somebody — these are the kind of people that we should use to negotiate and not the China people that we have who are political hacks who don't know what they're doing and we have problems like this. If these are the kinds of people — we should use our best and our finest.

Now, on that tariff — here's what I'm saying, China — they send their goods and we don't tax it — they do whatever they want to do. They do whatever what they do, OK. When we do business with China, they tax us. You don't know it, they tax us.

I have many friends that deal with China. They can't — when they order the product and when they finally get the product it is taxed. If you looking at what happened with Boeing and if you look at what happened with so many companies that deal — so we don't have an equal playing field. I'm saying, absolutely, we don't have to continue to lose 505 billion dollars as a trade deficit for the privilege of dealing with China.

I'm a free trader. I believe in it but we have to be smart and we have to use smart people to negotiate. I have the largest bank in the world as a tenant of mine. I sell tens' of millions of [*inaudible*].

I love China. I love the Chinese people but they laugh themselves, they can't believe how stupid the American leadership is.

CAVUTO: So you're open to a tariff?

TRUMP: I'm totally open to a tariff. If they don't treat us fairly, hey, their whole trade is tariffed. You can't deal in China without tariffs. They do it to us, we don't it. It's not fair trade.

KASICH: Neil, Neil — can I say one thing about this. I'm a free trader. I support NAFTA. I believe in the PTT because it's important those countries in Asia are interfacing against China. And we do need China — Donald's right about North Korea.

I mean the fact is, is that they need to put the pressure on and frankly we need to intercepts ships coming out of North Korea so they don't proliferate all these dangerous materials. But what he's touching — talking about, I think has got merit. And I'll allow putting that tariff or whatever he's saying here...

TRUMP: I'm happy to have him tonight... [*laughter*]

KASICH: For too long — no, for too long, what happens is somebody dumps their product in our country and take our people's jobs, and then we go to an international court and it takes them like a year or two to figure out whether they were cheating us. And guess what? The worker's out of a job.

So when they — be found against that country that's selling products in here lower than the cost of what it takes to produce them, then what do we tell the worker? Oh, well, you know, it just didn't work out for you.

I think we should be for free trade but I think fair trade. And when countries violate trade agreements or dump product in this country, we need — we need to stand up against those countries that do that without making them into an enemy.

And I want to just suggest to you. How do I know this? Because so many people in my family worked in steel mills, and they didn't work with a white collar, they worked in a blue collar. And the fact is those jobs are critical, they're hard working members of the middle class and they need to be paid attention to because they're Americans and they carry the load. So let's demand open trade but fair trade in this country. That's what I think we need to do. [*applause*]

CAVUTO: All right.

RUBIO: But on this point, if I may add something on this point. We are all frustrated with what China is doing. I think we need to be very careful with tariffs, and here's why.

China doesn't pay the tariff, the buyer pays the tariff. If you send a tie or a shirt made in China into the United States and an American goes to buy it at the store and there's a tariff on it, it gets passed on in the price to price to the consumer.

So I think the better approach, the best thing we can do to protect ourselves against China economically is to make our economy stronger, which means reversing course from all the damage Barack Obama is doing to this economy.

It begins with tax reform. Let's not have the most expensive business tax rate in the world. Let's allow companies to immediately expense. [*applause*]

It continues with regulatory reform. Regulations in this country are out of control, especially the Employment Prevention Agency, the EPA, and all of the rules they continue to impose on our economy and hurting us.

How about Obamacare, a certified job killer? It needs to be repealed and replaced. And we need to bring our debt under control, make our economy stronger. That is the way to deal with China at the end of the day.

TRUMP: Neil, the problem...

BARTIROMO: We're getting...

TRUMP: ... with what Marco is saying is that it takes too long, they're sucking us dry and it takes too long. It would just — you absolutely have to get involved with China, they are taking so much of what we have in terms of jobs in terms of money. We just can't do it any longer.

CAVUTO: He is right. If you put a tariff on a good, it's Americans who pay.

BUSH: Absolutely.

TRUMP: You looking at me?

BUSH: Yeah.

BARTIROMO: Prices go higher for...

TRUMP: Can I tell you what? It will never happen because they'll let their currency go up. They're never going to let it happen.

Japan, the same thing. They are devaluing — it's so impossible for — you look at Caterpillar Tractor and what's happening with Caterpillar and Kamatsu. Kamatsu is a tractor company in Japan. Friends of mine are ordering Kamatsu tractors now because they've de-valued the yen to such an extent that you can't buy a Caterpillar tractor. And we're letting them get away with it and we can't let them get away with it.

And that's why we have to use Carl and we have to use our great businesspeople and not political hacks to negotiate with these guys. [*applause*]

BUSH: Here's — apart from the — apart from the higher prices on consumers and people are living paycheck to paycheck, apart from that, there will be retaliation.

BARTIROMO: Yeah.

BUSH: So they soybean sales from Iowa, entire soybean production goes — the equivalent of it goes to China. Or how about Boeing right here within a mile? Do you think that the Chinese, if they had a 45 percent tariff imposed on all their imports wouldn't retaliate and start buying Airbus? Of course, they would. This would be devastating for the economy. We need someone with a steady hand being president of the United States.

BARTIROMO: Real quick, Senator — go ahead, Senator Cruz. [*applause*]

And then we have to get to tax reform.

TRUMP: And we don't need a weak person being president of the United State, OK? Because that's what we'd get if it were Jeb — I tell you what, we don't need that.

AUDIENCE: Boo.

TRUMP: We don't need that. That's essentially what we have now, and we don't need that. And that's why we're in the trouble that we're in now. And by the way, Jeb you mentioned Boeing, take a look. They order planes, they make Boeing build their plant in China. They don't want them made here. They want those planes made in China.

BUSH: They're a mile away from here.

TRUMP: That's not the way the game is supposed to be played.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, Governor Bush. Thank you, Mr. Trump. Very briefly.

BUSH: My name was mentioned. My name was mentioned here. The simple fact is that the plane that's being build here is being sold to China. You can — if you — you flew in with your 767, didn't you? Right there, right next to the plant.

TRUMP: No, the new planes. I'm not talking about now, I'm talking about in the future they're building massive plants in China because China does not want Boeing building their planes here, they want them built in China, because China happens to be smart the way they do it, not the way we do it.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, Mr. Trump.

BUSH: When you head back to airport tonight, go check and see what the...

BARTIROMO: Thank you, Mr. Trmup. Thank you, Governor.

TRUMP: I'll check for you.

BUSH: Check it out. *[laughter]*

BARTIROMO: Senator briefly.

CRUZ: Thanks for coming back to me, Maria. Both Donald and Jeb have good points, and there is a middle ground. Donald is right that China is running over President Obama like he is a child, President Obama is not protecting American workers and we are getting hammered.

You know, I sat down with the senior leadership of John Deere. They discussed how — how hard it is to sell tractors in China, because all the regulatory barriers. They're protectionist.

But Jeb is also right that, if we just impose a tariff, they'll put reciprocal tariffs, which will hurt Iowa farmers and South Carolina producers and 20 percent of the American jobs that depend on exports.

So the way you do it is you pass a tax plan like the tax plan I've introduced: a simple flat tax, 10 percent for individuals, and a 16 percent business flat tax, you abolish the IRS...*[applause]*...and here's the critical point, Maria — the business flat tax enables us to abolish the corporate income tax, the death tax, the Obamacare taxes, the payroll taxes, and they're border-adjustable, so every export pays no taxes whatsoever.

It's tax-free — a huge advantage for our farmers and ranchers and manufacturers — and every import pays the 16 percent business flat tax. It's like a tariff, but here's the difference: if we impose a tariff, China responds.

The business flat tax, they already impose their taxes on us, so there's no reciprocal...*[bell rings]*...tariffs that come against us. It puts us on a level, even playing field, which brings jobs here at home...

UNKNOWN: Maria...

CRUZ: ... and as president, I'm going to fight for the working men and women.

[crosstalk]

BARTIROMO: We've got to get to tax reform, gentlemen. We've got to get to tax reform, and we've got to get to the...

UNKNOWN: Yeah, but I want to talk about taxes.

BARTIROMO: ... we've got to get to the national debt as well. Coming up next, the growing national debt, the war on crime, tax reform. More from North Charleston, South Carolina, when we come right back.

[commercial break]

BARTIROMO: Welcome back to the Republican presidential here in North Charleston. Right back to the questions.

[applause]

Governor Christie, we have spoken much about cutting spending, given the \$19 trillion debt. But according to one report, America needs \$3.6 trillion in infrastructure spending by 2020.

Here in South Carolina, 11 percent of bridges are considered structurally deficient, costing drivers a billion dollars a year in auto repairs. What is your plan to fix the ailing roads and bridges without breaking the bank?

CHRISTIE: Well, I'm glad you asked that, Maria. Here's — here's our plan. We've all been talking about tax reforms tonight, and paying for infrastructure is caught right up in tax reform.

If you reform the corporate tax system in this country, which, as was mentioned before, is the highest rate in the world — and we double tax, as you know.

And what that's led to over \$2 trillion of American companies' monies that are being kept offshore, because they don't want to pay the second tax. And who can blame them? They pay tax once overseas. They don't want to pay 35 percent tax on the way back.

So beside reforming that tax code, bringing it down to 25 percent and eliminating those special-interest loopholes that the lobbyists and the lawyers and the accountants have given — bring that rate down to 25 percent, but also, a one-time repatriation of that money.

Bring the money — the \$2 trillion — back to the United States. We'll tax it, that one time, at 8.75 percent, because 35 percent of zero is zero, but 8.75 percent of \$2 trillion is a lot of money. And I would then dedicate that money to rebuilding infrastructure here in this country.

It would not necessitate us raising any taxes. It would bring the money back into the United States to help build jobs by American companies and get our economy moving again, and growing at a higher rate, and it would rebuild those roads and bridges and tunnels that you were talking about. And — and — and the last piece of this, Maria, is this. You know, the fact is that this president has penalized corporations in America. He's penalized — and doesn't understand. In fact, what that hurts is hurt hardworking taxpayers.

You've seen middle-class wages go backwards \$3,700 during the Obama administration. That's wrong for hardworking taxpayers in this country. We'd rebuild infrastructure that would also create jobs in this country, and we'd work with the states to do it the right way, to do it more efficiently and more effectively.

And remember this — I'm credible on this for this reason: Americans for Tax Reform says that I've vetoed more tax increases than any governor in American history. We don't need to raise taxes to get this done.

We need to make the government run smarter and better, and reform this corporate tax system, bring that money back to the United States to build jobs and rebuild our infrastructure, and we need to use it also to protect our grid from terrorists.

All of those things are important, and all those things would happen in a Christie administration.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir. Dr. Carson...[applause]...it is true U.S. companies have \$2 trillion in cash sitting overseas right now. That could be used for investment and jobs in America.

Also, several companies right now are pursuing mergers to move their corporate headquarters abroad, and take advantage of much lower taxes. What will you do to stop the flow of companies building cash away from America, and those leaving America altogether?

CARSON: Well, I would suggest a fair tax system, and that's what we have proposed. A flat tax for everybody — no exemptions, no deductions, no shelters, because some people have a better capability of taking advantage of those than others.

You know, and then the other thing we have to do is stop spending so much money. You know, I — my — my mother taught me this. You know, she only had a third-grade education, but — you know, she knew how to stretch a dollar.

I mean, she would drive a car until it wouldn't make a sound, and then gather up all her coins and buy a new car. In fact, if my mother were secretary of treasury, we would not be in a deficit situation. But...*[laughter]*... you know, the — the — the fact of the matter is — you know, if we fix the taxation system, make it absolutely fair, and get rid of the incredible regulations — because every regulation is a tax, it's a — on goods and services. And it's the most regressive tax there is.

You know, when you go into the store and buy a box of laundry detergent, and the price has up — you know, 50 cents because of regulations, a poor person notices that. A rich person does not. Middle class may notice it when they get to the cash register.

And everything is costing more money, and we are killing our — our — our people like this. And Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton will say it's those evil rich people.

It's not the evil rich people. It's the evil government that is — that is putting all these regulations on us so that we can't survive. *[applause]*

BARTIROMO: Thank you, sir.

Senator Rubio...

TRUMP: Maria — Maria, what you were talking about just now is called corporate inversion. It's one of the biggest problems our country has. Right now, corporations, by the thousands, are thinking of leaving our country with the jobs — leave them behind.

They're leaving because of taxes, but they are also leaving because they can't get their money back and everybody agrees, Democrats and Republicans, that is should come back in. But they can't get along. They can't even make a deal.

Here is the case, they both agree, they can't make a deal. We have to do something. Corporate inversion is one of the biggest problems we have. So many companies are going to leave our country.

BARTIROMO: Which is why we raised it.

Senator Rubio?

Thank you, Mr. Trump.

TRUMP: Thank you.

BARTIROMO: One of the biggest fiscal challenges is our entitlement programs, particularly Social Security and Medicare. What policies will you put forward to make sure these programs are more financially secure?

RUBIO: Well, first let me address the tax issue because it's related to the entitlement issue and I want to thank you for holding a substantive debates where we can have debates about these key issues on taxes. *[applause]*

Here is the one thing I'm not going to do. I'm not going to have something that Ted described in his tax plan. It's called the value added tax. And it's a tax you find in many companies in Europe.

Where basically, businesses now will have to pay a tax, both on the money they make, but they also have to pay taxes on the money that they pay their employees.

And that's why they have it in Europe, because it is a way to blindfolded the people, that's what Ronald Reagan said. Ronald Regan opposed the value tax because he said it was a way to blindfold the people, so the true cost of government was not there there for them.

Now, you can support one now that's very low. But what is to prevent a future liberal president or a liberal Congress from coming back and not just raising the income tax, but also raising that VAT tax, and that vat tax is really bad for seniors. Because seniors, if they are retired, are no longer earning an income from a job. And therefore, they don't get the income tax break, but their prices are going to be higher, because the vat tax is embedded in both the prices that business that are charging and in the wages they pay their employees.

When I am president of the United States, I'm going to side with Ronald Regan on this and not Nancy Pelosi and we are not having a vat tax. *[applause]*

BARTIROMO: Thank you senator.

CRUZ: Maria, I assume that I can respond to that.

BARTIROMO: Senator Cruz, yes. You were meant to. Yes, of course.

CRUZ: Well, Marco has been floating this attack for a few weeks now, but the problem is, the business flat tax in my proposal is not a vat. A vat is imposed as a sales tax when you buy a good.

This is a business flat tax. It is imposed on business and a critical piece that Marco seems to be missing is that this 16 percent business flat tax enables us to eliminate the corporate income tax. It goes away. It enables us to eliminate the death tax.

If you're a farmer, if you're a rancher, if you are small business owner, the death tax is gone. We eliminate the payroll tax, we eliminate the Obamacare taxes. And listen, there is a real difference between Marco's tax plan and mine.

Mine gives every American a simple, flat tax of 10 percent. Marco's top tax rate is 35 percent. My tax plan enables you to fill out your taxes on a postcard so we can abolish the IRS. Marco leaves the IRS code in with all of the complexity. We need to break the Washington cartel, and the only way to do it is to end all the subsidies and all...*[bell rings]*...the mandates and have a simple flat tax. The final observation, invoked Ronald Reagan. I would note that Art Laffer, Ronald Reagan's chief economic adviser, has written publicly, that my simple flat tax is the best tax plan of any of the individuals on this stage cause it produces economic growth, it raises wages and it helps everyone from the very poorest to the very richest.

BARTIROMO: Thank you senator. *[applause]*

RUBIO: But that's not an accurate description of the plan. Because, first of all, you may rename the IRS but you are not going to abolish the IRS, because there has to be some agency that's going to collect your vat tax. Someone's going to be collecting this tax.

In fact, Ronald Reagan's treasury, when Ronald Reagan's treasury looked at the vat tax, you know what they found? That they were going to have to hire 20,000 new IRS agencies to collect it.

The second point, it does not eliminate the corporate tax or the payroll tax. Businesses will now have to pay 16 percent on the money they make. They will also have to pay 16 percent on the money they pay their employees.

So there are people watching tonight in business. If you are now hit on a 60 percent tax on both your income and on the wages you pay your employees, where are you going to get that money from? You're going to get it by paying your employees less and charging your customers more, that is a tax, the difference is, you don't see it on the bill.

And that's why Ronald Reagan said that it was a blindfold. You blindfold the American people so that they cannot see the true cost of government. Now 16 percent is what the rate Ted wants it at. But what happens if, God forbid, the next Barack Obama takes over, and the next Nancy Pelosi, and the next Harry Reid...*[bell rings]*...and they decide, we're going to raise it to 30 percent, plus we're going to raise the income tax to 30 percent. Now, you've got Europe.

[crosstalk]

BARTIROMO: Thank you senator. I have to get to a question for Mr. Trump.

CRUZ: Maria...

BARTIROMO: Yes.

CRUZ: Maria, I'd just like to say...*[crosstalk]*

CHRISTIE: Maria, I'd like to interrupt this on the floor of the Senate to actually answer the question you asked, which was on entitlements. Do you remember that, everybody? This was a question on entitlements.

And the reason — and the reason...*[crosstalk]*...no, you already had your chance, Marco, and you blew it. Here's the thing. *[crosstalk]* The fact is, the reason why...

RUBIO: If you'll answer the *[inaudible]* core question.

CHRISTIE: ... the fact is — the fact is the reason why that no one wants to answer entitlements up here is because it's hard. It's a hard problem. And I'm the only one up on this stage who back in April put forward a detailed entitlement

reform plan that will save over \$1 trillion, save Social Security, save Medicare, and avoid this — avoid what Hillary Rodham Clinton will do to you.

Because what she will do is come in and she will raise Social Security taxes. Bernie Sanders has already said it. And she is just one or two more poll drops down from even moving further left than she's moved already to get to the left of Bernie on this.

We have seniors out there who are scared to death because this Congress — this one that we have right now, just stole \$150 billion from the Social Security retirement fund to give it to the Social Security disability fund. A Republican Congress did that.

And the fact is it was wrong. And they consorted with Barack Obama to steal from Social Security. We need to reform Social Security. Mine is the only plan that saves over \$1 trillion and that's why I'm answering your question.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, Governor. Thank you, Governor. [*applause*]

CARSON: Can I just add one very quick thing? And I just want to say, you know, last week we released our tax plan. And multiple reputable journals, including The Wall Street Journal, said ours is the best. Just want to get that out there, just saying.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, Dr. Carson.

Coming up, how would the candidates protect America, and another terror attack, if we were to see it. But first, you can join us live on stage during the commercial break right from home. Go to [facebook.com/foxbusiness](https://www.facebook.com/foxbusiness). We'll be streaming live and answering your questions during this break next.

More from South Carolina coming up. Stay with us.

[*commercial break*]

BARTIROMO: Mr. Trump, your net worth is in the multi-billions of dollars and have an ongoing thriving hotel and real estate business. Are you planning on putting your assets in a blind trust should you become president? With such vast wealth, how difficult will it be for you to disentangle yourself from your business and your money and prioritize America's interest first?

TRUMP: Well, it's an interesting question because I'm very proud of my company. As you too know, I know I built a very great company. But if I become president, I couldn't care less about my company. It's peanuts.

I want to use that same up here, whatever it may be to make America rich again and to make America great again. I have Ivanka, and Eric and Don sitting there. Run the company kids, have a good time. I'm going to do it for America.

So I would — I would be willing to do that.

BARTIROMO: So you'll put your assets in a blind trust?

TRUMP: I would put it in a blind trust. Well, I don't know if it's a blind trust if Ivanka, Don and Eric run it. If that's a blind trust, I don't know. But I would probably have my children run it with my executives and I wouldn't ever be involved because I wouldn't care about anything but our country, anything.

BARTIROMO: Thank you sir.

TRUMP: Thank you.

CAVUTO: Governor Christie, going back to your U.S. Attorney days, you had been praised by both parties as certainly a tough law and order guy. So I wonder what you make of recent statistics that showed violent crimes that have been spiking sometimes by double digit ratings in 30 cities across the country. Milwaukee Police Chief Ed Flynn said, "most local law enforcement officials feel abandoned by Washington." Former NYC Police Chief Ray Kelly, says that, "police are being less proactive because they're being overly scrutinized and second guessed and they're afraid of being sued or thrown in jail."

What would you do as president to address this?

CHRISTIE: Well, first off, let's face it, the FBI director James Comey was a friend of mine who I worked with as U.S.

Attorney of New Jersey. He was the U.S. Attorney in Manhattan. He said, "there's a chill wind blowing through law enforcement in this country." Here's why, the president of the United States and both his attorney's general, they give the benefit of the doubt to the criminal, not to the police officers.

That's the truth of the matter and you see it every time with this president. Every time he's got a chance, going all the way back to — remember that Great Beer Summit he had after he messed up that time. This is a guy who just believes that law enforcement are the bad guys.

Now, I for seven years was the U.S. Attorney of New Jersey. I worked hard with not only federal agents but with police officers and here's the problem, sanctuary cities is part of the problem in this country. That's where crime is happening in these cities where they don't enforce the immigration laws. And this president turns his back — this president doesn't enforce the marijuana laws in this country because he doesn't agree with them.

And he allows states to go ahead and do whatever they want on a substance that's illegal. This president allows lawlessness throughout this country. Here's what I would do Neil, I would appoint an Attorney General and I would have one very brief conversation with that Attorney General. I'd say, "General, enforce the law against everyone justly, fairly, and aggressively. Make our streets safe again. Make our police officers proud of what they do but more important than that, let them know how proud we are of them."

We do that, this country would be safe and secure again not only from criminals but from the terrorist who threaten us as well. I'm the only person on this stage who's done that and we will get it done as President of the United States.

CAVUTO: Thank you governor.

Governor Kasich, as someone has to deal with controversial police shootings in your own state, what do you make of Chicago's move recently to sort of restrain police? Maybe make them not so quick to use their guns?

KASICH: Well, I created a task force well over a year ago and the purpose was to bring law enforcement, community people, clergy and the person that I named as one of the co-chair was a lady by the name of Nina Turner, a former State Senator, a liberal Democrat. She actually ran against one of my friends and our head of public safety.

And they say down as a group trying to make sure that we can begin to heal some of these problems that we see between community and police.

And they came back with 23 recommendations. One of them is a statewide use of deadly force. And it is now being put into place everywhere across the state of Ohio. Secondly, a policy on recruiting and hiring, and then more resources for — for training.

But let me also tell you, one of the issues has got to be the integration of both community and police. Community has to understand that that police officer wants to get home at night, and not — not to lose their life. Their family is waiting for them.

At the same time, law enforcement understands there are people in the community who not only think that the system doesn't work for them, but works against them.

See, in Ohio, we've had some controversial decisions. But the leaders have come forward to realize that protest is fine, but violence is wrong. And it has been a remarkable situation in our state. And as president of the United States, it's all about communication, folks. It's all about getting people to listen to one another's problems.

And when you do that, you will be amazed at how much progress you can make, and how much healing we can have. Because, folks, at the end of the day, the country needs healed. I've heard a lot of hot rhetoric here tonight, but I've got to tell you, as somebody that actually passed a budget; that paid down a half-a-trillion dollars of our national debt, you can't do it alone. You've got to bring people together. You've got to give people hope.

And together, we can solve these problems that hurt us and heal America. And that is what's so critical for our neighborhoods, our families, our children, and our grandchildren. [*applause*]

CAVUTO: Thank you, Governor.

BARTIROMO: Senator Rubio? [*applause*]

Under current law, the U.S. is on track to issue more new permanent immigrants on green cards over the next five years

than the entire population of South Carolina. The CBO says your 2013 immigration bill would have increased green cardholders by another 10 million over 10 years.

Why are you so interested in opening up borders to foreigners when American workers have a hard enough time finding work?

RUBIO: Well, first of all, this is an issue that's been debated now for 30 years. And for 30 years, the issue of immigration has been about someone who's in this country, maybe they're here illegally, but they're looking for a job. This issue is not about that anymore.

First and foremost, this issue has to be now more than anything else about keeping America safe. And here's why. There is a radical jihadist group that is manipulating our immigration system. And not just green cards. They're looking — they're recruiting people that enter this country as doctors and engineers and even fiances. They understand the vulnerabilities we have on the southern border.

They're looking — they're looking to manipulate our — the visa waiver countries to get people into the United States. So our number one priority must now become ensuring that ISIS cannot get killers into the United States. So whether it's green cards or any other form of entry into America, when I'm president if we do not know who you are or why you are coming, you are not going to get into the United States of America.

BARTIROMO: So your thinking has changed?

RUBIO: The issue is a dramatically different issue than it was 24 months ago. Twenty-four months ago, 36 months ago, you did not have a group of radical crazies named ISIS who were burning people in cages and recruiting people to enter our country legally. They have a sophisticated understanding of our legal immigration system and we now have an obligation to ensure that they are not able to use that system against us.

The entire system of legal immigration must now be reexamined for security first and foremost, with an eye on ISIS. Because they're recruiting people to enter this country as engineers, posing as doctors, posing as refugees. We know this for a fact. They've contacted the trafficking networks in the Western Hemisphere to get people in through the southern border. And they got a killer in San Bernardino in posing as a fiance.

This issue now has to be about stopping ISIS entering the United States, and when I'm president we will.

BARTIROMO: Thank you, Senator. [*applause*]

CRUZ: But Maria, radical Islamic terrorism was not invented 24 months ago; 24 months ago, we had Al Qaida. We had Boko Haram. We had Hamas. We had Hezbollah. We had Iran putting operatives in South America and Central America. It's the reason why I stood with Jeff Sessions and Steve King and led the fight to stop the Gang of Eight amnesty bill, because it was clear then, like it's clear now, that border security is national security. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: Thank you, Senator.

CRUZ: It is also the case that that Rubio-Schumer amnesty bill, one of the things it did is it expanded Barack Obama's power to let in Syrian refugees. It enabled him — the president to certify them en masse without mandating meaningful background checks.

I think that's a mistake. That's why I've been leading the fight to stop it. And I would note the Senate just a few weeks ago voted to suspend refugees from Middle Eastern countries. I voted yes to suspend that. Marco voted on the other side. So you don't get to say we need to secure the borders, and at the same time try to give Barack Obama more authority to allow Middle Eastern refugees coming in, when the head of the FBI tells us they cannot vet them to determine if they are ISIS terrorists.

RUBIO: Maria, let me clear something up here. This is an interesting point when you talk about immigration. Ted Cruz, you used to say you supported doubling the number of green cards, now you say that you're against it. You used to support a 500 percent increase in the number of guest workers, now you say that you're against it. You used to support legalizing people that were here illegally, now you say you're against it. You used to say that you were in favor of birthright citizenship, now you say that you are against it.

And by the way, it's not just on immigration, you used to support TPA, now you say you're against it. I saw you on the Senate floor flip your vote on crop insurance because they told you it would help you in Iowa, and last week, we all saw

you flip your vote on ethanol in Iowa for the same reason. [applause]

That is not consistent conservatism, that is political calculation. When I am president, I will work consistently every single day to keep this country safe, not call Edward Snowden, as you did, a great public servant. Edward Snowden is a traitor. And if I am president and we get our hands on him, he is standing trial for treason. [applause]

And one more point, one more point. Every single time that there has been a Defense bill in the Senate, three people team up to vote against it. Bernie Sanders, Rand Paul and Ted Cruz. In fact, the only budget you have ever voted for, Ted, in your entire time in the Senate is a budget from Rand Paul that brags about how it cuts defense.

Here's the bottom line, and I'll close with this. If I'm president of the United States and Congress tries to cut the military, I will veto that in a millisecond. [applause]

BUSH: There's — look, there's —

CAVUTO: Gentlemen, gentlemen —

CRUZ: I'm going to get a response to that, Neil. There's no way he launches 11 attack —

CAVUTO: Very quick, very quick.

CRUZ: I'm going to — he had no fewer than 11 attacks there. I appreciate your dumping your [inaudible] research folder on the stage.

RUBIO: No, it's your record.

CRUZ: But I will say —

CAVUTO: Do you think they like each other?

CRUZ: — at least half of the things Marco said are flat-out false. They're absolutely false.

AUDIENCE: Boo.

CRUZ: So let's start — let's start with immigration. Let's start with immigration and have a little bit of clarity. Marco stood with Chuck Schumer and Barack Obama on amnesty. I stood with Jeff Sessions and Steve King. Marco stood today, standing on this stage Marco supports legalization and citizenship for 12 million illegals. I opposed and oppose legalization and citizenship.

And by the way, the attack he keeps throwing out on the military budget, Marco knows full well I voted for his amendment to increase military spending to \$697 billion. What he said, and he said it in the last, it's simply not true. And as president, I will rebuild the military and keep this country safe.

CAVUTO: All right, gentlemen, we've got to stop. I know you are very passionate about that. [applause]

Governor Bush, fears have gripped this country obviously, and you touched on it earlier since the San Bernardino attacks. Since our last, the national conversation has changed, according to Facebook data as well.

Now this first graphic shows the issues that were most talked about right before those attacks and now after: the issues of Islam, homeland security and ISIS now loom very large. The FBI says Islamic radicals are using social media to communicate and that it needs better access to communication. Now the CEO of Apple, Governor, Tim Cook said unless served with a warrant private communication is private, period. Do you agree, or would you try to convince him otherwise?

BUSH: I would try to convince him otherwise, but this last back and forth between two senators — back bench senators, you know, explains why we have the mess in Washington, D.C. We need a president that will fix our immigration laws and stick with it, not bend with the wind.

The simple fact is one of the ways, Maria, to solve the problem you described is narrow the number of people coming by family petitioning to what every other country has so that we have the best and the brightest that come to our country. We need to control the border, we need to do all of this in a comprehensive way, not just going back and forth and talking about stuff —

CAVUTO: Would you answer this question?

BUSH: Oh, I'll talk about that, too. But you haven't asked me a question in a while, Neil, so I thought I'd get that off my chest if you don't mind. [*laughter*]

CAVUTO: Fair enough. So Tim Cook — so Tim Cook says he's going to keep it private.

BUSH: I got that. And the problem today is there's no confidence in Washington, D.C. There needs to be more than one meeting, there needs to complete dialogue with the large technology companies. They understand that there's a national security risk. We ought to give them a little bit of a liability release so that they share data amongst themselves and share data with the federal government, they're not fearful of a lawsuit.

We need to make sure that we keep the country safe. This is the first priority. The cybersecurity challenges that we face, this administration failed us completely, completely. Not just the hacking of OPM, but that is — that is just shameful. 23 million files in the hands of the Chinese? So it's not just the government — the private sector companies, it's also our own government that needs to raise the level of our game.

We should put the NSA in charge of the civilian side of this as well. That expertise needs to spread all across the government and there needs to be much more cooperation with our private sector.

CAVUTO: But if Tim cook is telling you no, Mr. President.

BUSH: You've got to keep asking. You've got to keep asking because this is a hugely important issue. If you can encrypt messages, ISIS can, over these platforms, and we have no ability to have a cooperative relationship —

CAVUTO: Do you ask or do you order?

BUSH: Well, if the law would change, yeah. But I think there has to be recognition that if we — if we are too punitive, then you'll go to other — other technology companies outside the United States. And what we want to do is to control this.

We also want to dominate this from a commercial side. So there's a lot of balanced interests. But the president leads in this regard. That's what we need. We need leadership, someone who has a backbone and sticks with things, rather than just talks about them as though anything matters when you're talking about amendments that don't even actually are part of a bill that ever passed.

CAVUTO: Governor, thank you. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: When we come right back, closing statements. Stay with us.

[*commercial break*]

BARTIROMO: Welcome back.

Candidates, it is time for your closing statements. You get 60 seconds each.

Governor John Kasich, we begin with you.

KASICH: You know, in our country, there are a lot of people who feel as though they just don't have the power. You know, they feel like if they don't have a lobbyist, if they're not wealthy, that somehow they don't get to play.

But all of my career, you know, having been raised in — by a mailman father whose father was a coal miner, who died of black lung and was losing his eyesight; or a mother whose mother could barely speak English. You see, all of my career, I've fought about giving voice to the people that I grew up with and voice to the people that elected me.

Whether it's welfare reform and getting something back for the hard-earned taxpayers; whether it's engaging in Pentagon reform and taking on the big contractors that were charging thousands of dollars for hammers and screw drivers and ripping us off; or whether it's taking on the special interests in the nursing home industry in Ohio, so that mom and dad can have the ability to stay in their own home, rather than being forced into a nursing home.

Look, that's who I stand up for. That's who's in my mind... [*bell rings*]... And if you really want to believe that you can get your voice back, I will tell you, as I have all my career, I will continue to fight for you, because you're the ones that built this country, and will carry it into the future. Thank you. [*applause*]

CAVUTO: Governor Bush?

BUSH: Who can you count on to keep us safer, stronger and freer? Results count, and as governor, I pushed Florida up to the top in terms of jobs, income and small business growth.

Detailed plans count, and I believe that the plan I've laid out to destroy ISIS before the tragedies of San Bernardino and Paris are the right ones.

Credibility counts. There'll be people here that will talk about what they're going to do. I've done it. I ask for your support to build, together, a safer and stronger America. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: Governor Chris Christie?

CHRISTIE: Maria, Neil, thank you for a great tonight.

When I think about the folks who are out there at home tonight watching, and I think about what they had to watch this week — the spectacle they had to watch on the floor of the House of Representatives, with the president of the United States, who talked a fantasy land about the way they're feeling.

They know that this country is not respected around the world anymore. They know that this country is pushing the middle class, the hardworking taxpayers, backwards, and they saw a president who doesn't understand their pain, and doesn't have any plan for getting away from it.

I love this country. It's the most exceptional country the world has ever known. We need someone to fight for the people. We need a fighter for this country again.

I've lived my whole life fighting — fighting for things that I believe in, fighting for justice and to protect people from crime and terrorism, fighting to stand up for folks who have not had enough and need an opportunity to get more, and to stand up and fight against the special interests.

But here's the best way that we're going to make America much more exceptional: it is to make sure we put someone on that stage in September who will fight Hillary Clinton and make sure she never, ever gets in the White House again.

I am the man who can bring us together to do that, and I ask for your vote. [*applause*]

CAVUTO: Dr. Ben Carson?

CARSON: You know, in recent travels around this country, I've encountered so many Americans who are discouraged and angry as they watch our freedom, our security and the American dream slipping away under an unresponsive government that is populated by bureaucrats and special interest groups.

We're not going to solve this problem with traditional politics. The only way we're going to solve this problem is with we, the people. And I ask you to join me in truth and honesty and integrity. Bencarson.com — we will heal, inspire and revive America for our children. [*applause*]

BARTIROMO: Senator Marco Rubio?

RUBIO: You know, 200 years ago, America was founded on this powerful principle that our rights don't come from government. Our rights come from God.

That's why we embraced free enterprise, and it made us the most prosperous people in the history of the world. That's why we embraced individual liberty, and we became the freest people ever, and the result was the American miracle.

But now as I travel the country, people say what I feel. This country is changing. It feels different. We feel like we're being left behind and left out.

And the reason is simple: because in 2008, we elected as president someone who wasn't interested in fixing America. We elected someone as president who wants to change America, who wants to make it more like the rest of the world.

And so he undermines the Constitution, and he undermines free enterprise by expanding government, and he betrays our allies and cuts deals with our enemies and guts our military. And that's why 2016 is a turning point in our history. If we elect Hillary Clinton, the next four years will be worse than the last eight, and our children will be the first Americans ever to inherit a diminished country.

But if we elect the right person — if you elect me — we will turn this country around, we will reclaim the American dream and this nation will be stronger and greater than it has ever been. [applause]

CAVUTO: Senator Ted Cruz?

CRUZ: "13 Hours" — tomorrow morning, a new movie will debut about the incredible bravery of the men fighting for their lives in Benghazi and the politicians that abandoned them. I want to speak to all our fighting men and women.

I want to speak to all the moms and dads whose sons and daughters are fighting for this country, and the incredible sense of betrayal when you have a commander-in-chief who will not even speak the name of our enemy, radical Islamic terrorism, when you have a commander-in- chief who sends \$150 billion to the Ayatollah Khamenei, who's responsible for murdering hundreds of our servicemen and women.

I want to speak to all of those maddened by political correctness, where Hillary Clinton apologizes for saying all lives matter. This will end. It will end on January 2017.

And if I am elected president, to every soldier and sailor and airman and marine, and to every police officer and firefighter and first responder who risk their lives to keep us safe, I will have your back. [applause]

BARTIROMO: Mr. Donald Trump?

TRUMP: I stood yesterday with 75 construction workers. They're tough, they're strong, they're great people. Half of them had tears pouring down their face. They were watching the humiliation of our young ten sailors, sitting on the floor with their knees in a begging position, their hands up.

And Iranian wise guys having guns to their heads. It was a terrible sight. A terrible sight. And the only reason we got them back is because we owed them with a stupid deal, \$150 billion. If I'm president, there won't be stupid deals anymore.

We will make America great again. We will win on everything we do. Thank you. [applause]

BARTIROMO: Candidates, thank you.

CAVUTO: Gentlemen, thank you all. All of you. That wraps up our debate. We went a little bit over here. But we wanted to make sure everyone was able to say their due. He's upset. All right. Thank you for joining us. Much more to come in the Spin Room ahead.

NOTE: The criteria for appearing in the main debate is explained as, "Candidates must either: 1) Place in the top six nationally, based on an average of the five most recent national polls recognized by FOX News; OR 2) Place in the top five in Iowa, based on an average of the five most recent Iowa state polls recognized by FOX News; OR 3) Place in the top five in New Hampshire, based on an average of the five most recent New Hampshire state polls recognized by FOX News."

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