

[Las Vegas Debate Fact Check](#)

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(The Caucus)

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Highlight: New York Times reporters examine statements from candidates in the Republican field on immigration, the economy, foreign policy and health care.

Body

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NEXT

Mitt Romney and Gov. Rick Perry in one of many heated exchanges.

Romney's Texas Jobs Claim

In an attack on Gov. Rick Perry's record on job creation in Texas, Mitt Romney said 40 percent of the jobs created in the state while Mr. Perry was governor went to illegal immigrants.

Mr. Romney was citing a recent study by the Center for Immigration Studies, a conservative-leaning think tank that favors reducing immigration over all. The study, by Steve Camarota, a demographer, found that 81 percent of the

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jobs created in Texas since 2007 went to recently arrived immigrant workers, including both legal and illegal immigrants. About half of the jobs, or about 40 percent, went to newly arrived illegal immigrants, the study found.

Governor Perry's campaign says the study is false, arguing essentially that it could not be right because the numbers did not add up. A post on the Perry campaign Web site cites a statistic from the Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that Texas has gained 384,700 jobs since 2007. Department of Homeland Security figures cited by the campaign show that 60,000 illegal immigrants arrived in Texas in that period. That number does not amount to 40 percent of the new jobs. So, Mr. Perry says, the math and the study must be wrong.

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Romney and Illegal Immigration

Governor Perry went on the offensive to attack Mr. Romney over an [immigration controversy](#) that came to light when Mr. Romney campaigned for president in 2008.

"You hired illegals in your home and you knew about it for a year," Mr. Perry said.

He said that a year after Mr. Romney first learned that illegal immigrants were taking care of his lawn, those immigrants were still working for him. Mr. Romney's claim that he is tough on illegal immigration is "the height of hypocrisy," Mr. Perry said.

Mr. Romney fired back, "I don't think I've ever hired an illegal immigrant in my life." He gave a long explanation: when he discovered that his landscaping company had sent illegal immigrants to his home for the second time, he fired the company and told the illegal immigrants working at his house to leave.

It isn't clear that Mr. Romney ever knew directly that his landscaping company was using illegal immigrants to tend his lawn. But the episode was embarrassing for Mr. Romney, and it is still awkward now.

[The Boston Globe](#) first reported in December 2006 that Mr. Romney was employing a lawn care company that regularly hired illegal immigrants. Mr. Romney said he told an illegal immigrant working on his property to leave but continued to use the same lawn service company. A year later, The Globe reported that the service had once again sent illegal immigrants to Mr. Romney's house in Belmont, Mass. On the same day as the Globe report was published, Mr. Romney fired the company.

At that time, Mr. Romney said he had continued to use the same company because the company had guaranteed that it would not hire any illegal immigrants.

In Tuesday's [debate](#), Mr. Romney said he would combat illegal immigration by adopting a nationwide electronic program to verify the immigration status of all new hires.

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Border Fence

Is it possible to build a fence along the entire 2,000-mile United States-Mexico border? And if it is, is it worth the cost and would it effectively secure the border?

Most of the candidates are competing to outdo one another on their support for building a fence -- as Mrs. Bachmann has put it -- "on every mile, every foot, every inch" of the border. Mr. Cain has called for an electrified fence that could "kill" people, a statement he later said was in jest, then later still said he meant.

Only Mr. Perry, whose state shares 1,200 miles of border, begs to differ about the sense of a hard fence on every mile, without conceding one iota of his own commitment to securing the border.

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It would take 10 to 15 years and cost \$30 billion to build a complete fence, Mr. Perry said, arguing that a more cost-effective way is to build a fence in high-traffic areas and to use "boots on the ground" and [Predator drones](#) to monitor other areas. "That is the way to shut that border down," he said.

The Department of Homeland Security agrees with Mr. Perry. Officials say that a hard fence is prohibitively costly and inefficient, given that many stretches of the border are in remote mountain areas. To date, according to my colleague Julia Preston, who covers immigration, the department has completed about 650 miles of hard fence, mostly in cities and at points of heavy illegal crossings. Most of that work was done under the Bush administration.

A report in February by the [Government Accountability Office](#) found that border authorities, by their own measure, had "operational control" of only 873 miles, or 43 percent, of the border.

Homeland security officials responded that they could either patrol or monitor 81 percent of the border, and that the remaining areas were hostile terrain where illegal crossings are rare.

The Obama administration, with the support of [Border Patrol](#) officials, has focused on surveillance technology, equipping the Border Patrol with dozens of fixed remote surveillance systems for busy crossing points and mobile surveillance units for mountainous terrain.

The Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington think tank that seeks to lower immigration, wants more border security but does not favor a fence across the entire border.

(Incidentally, apprehensions by the Border Patrol dropped to 448,000 in 2010, the lowest number since 1972, according to the Department of Homeland Security. The decline under the Obama administration accelerated a drop in border apprehensions that began under President [George W. Bush](#). Since 2005, apprehensions at the Mexican border are down 61 percent.)

That is not stopping most of the Republican candidates from calling for a mile-by-mile fence. Over the weekend, Mrs. Bachmann raised her own bid, signing a pledge to build a "double fence" along the border.

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A Model Plan?

Another Republican [presidential debate](#), another attack on Mitt Romney for the health care plan that was the centerpiece of his tenure as Massachusetts governor but has since emerged as the most frequent point of attack for his Republican rivals.

Tonight the attack came from Gov. Rick Perry of Texas, who criticized Mr. Romney for the plan and said it was the basis of [President Obama](#)'s health care plan, more commonly known among Republicans as "Obamacare."

Mr. Romney punched back, suggesting that he never thought his plan would or should be a model for a national program to expand health insurance.

Mr. Romney said that during the 2008 campaign, "I was asked: 'Is this something that you would have the whole nation do?' And I said: 'No; this is something that was crafted for Massachusetts. It would be wrong to adopt this as a nation.' "

Not exactly. Mr. Romney has repeatedly suggested that he believed that the Massachusetts program -- and in particular its mandate for individuals to purchase health insurance plans -- would be a good model for the rest of the country.

During an appearance on "Meet the Press" in December 2007, Mr. Romney said that while he did believe that every state would face different circumstances, his program was "a good model for other states."

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"I think it's a good model for other states. Maybe not every state but most, and so what I'd do at the federal level is give every state the same kind of flexibility we got from the federal government as well as some carrots and sticks to actually get all their citizens insured. And I think a lot of states will choose what we did."

Mr. Romney added that he would not want a policy that would force other states to adopt the Massachusetts model -- which Mr. Obama's health care bill, in some sense, does -- but suggested that other states should consider the mandate.

"So if a state chose a mandate, it wouldn't bother you?" asked the host, [Tim Russert](#).

"I'd think it's a terrific idea," Mr. Romney answered. "I think you're going to find when it's all said and done, after all these states that are the laboratories of democracy get their chance to try their own plans, those who follow the path that we pursued will find it's the best path, and we'll end up with a nation that's taken a mandate approach."

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A Deeper Look at 9-9-9

[Herman Cain](#) said his much-discussed "9-9-9" plan "does not raise taxes on those that are making the least. It's simply not true."

But that is exactly what a growing number of [independent analysts](#) have concluded.

The plan calls for deep cuts in the existing federal taxes on individual and corporate income, both of which would be reduced to a flat rate of 9 percent from a system of tiered rates that run above 30 percent for the highest earners. Mr. Cain then proposes the addition of a 9 percent tax on sales.

Analysts say Mr. Cain's plan would raise taxes for lower-income families, while reducing the taxes paid by higher-income families.

"Herman Cain's 9-9-9 plan is a terrific example of fiscal hocus-pocus," Edward D. Kleinbard, a law professor at the [University of Southern California](#), writes in a coming analysis of the plan for the trade journal Tax Notes. "It is presented as a low-tax panacea, but it actually would raise the tax bills of many Americans very substantially."

Professor Kleinbard estimated that a family with \$120,000 in 2010 income would have paid \$541 less in federal taxes under Mr. Cain's plan. A family that earned \$50,000, by contrast, would have paid \$4,800 more.

The Tax Policy Center, a joint venture of the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institute, [concluded that the plan amounted to a 25.38 percent national sales tax](#). Flat sales taxes fall more heavily on lower-income families, siphoning off a much larger share of their total income.

It is also important to note that the 9-9-9 plan is only a transitional stage in Mr. Cain's broader plan to overhaul federal taxation. He has proposed the ultimate elimination of income taxes, in favor of a flat 30 percent sales tax.

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- [Fact Checking the Republican Debate on the Economy](#)
- [Fact Checking the G.O.P. Debate in Orlando](#)
- [Fact Check: Social Security, Health Care and More](#)
- [Debate Suggests Brutish Campaign to Come](#)
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