

Watching Tuesday's Republican presidential debate, with the eight prime-time contenders talking over and past one another, the question arises: Should the party show a few of these candidates the door?

Some fret that this mash-up lacks seriousness. The Republican National Committee says it won't intervene. It is relying on voters to usher also-rans off the national stage, and that may be a good thing.

Americans won't pay full attention to the presidential campaign for weeks. By the time they do, debates and media exposure will have made for worthy vetting of these candidates' attention-getting but illogical tax plans, their dubious statements, and that most symbolic but ridiculous of qualifications, their early biographies. Gov. Scott Walker's exit suggests that fears of "super PAC" money's keeping flawed candidates afloat may not materialize.

A number of conservative thinkers believe the shedding of vestigial candidates will happen soon enough. In a coming book, Henry Olsen of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington divides the Republican electorate into "four discrete factions that are based primarily on ideology, with elements of class and religious background tempering that focus."