

What the Republicans said about key issues for California

Wednesday's Republican debate from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley was the first minus Rudy Giuliani and the last GOP debate before Tuesday's crucial round of nearly two dozen contests, including the California primary. Many issues surfaced during the debate, including those highlighted here.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS



ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT



IMMIGRATION



IRAQ WAR



LEADERSHIP



MIKE HUCKABEE
Former Arkansas governor

Said he'd prefer infrastructure investment to tax rebates as a way to stimulate the economy: "Most people are going to go out and buy some consumables like a pair of shoes that they probably don't even need, but they're going to buy them, and they're most likely an import from China. My point is, whose economy are we stimulating when we do that?"

Supported California's request for federal global warming waiver. "I believe that Gov. Schwarzenegger ought to be able to carry out the plan, because, if he's right, every other state is going to copy him. And if he's wrong, every other state is going to recruit the jobs that he lost in California to their own states."

Supported a "secure" border fence "within 18 months" and said illegal immigrants seeking legal status should "have to go to the back of the line and start over. ... It's to make sure that everybody ... has their head up and lives in the light, not the darkness, and doesn't run and hide every time they see a police car."

Said victory in Iraq is essential because "if we leave a bigger mess in Iraq than is there now, it is not just going to affect Iraq. It's going to affect the rest of the Middle East. It will erupt in a completely destabilized environment into which that vacuum is exactly the kind of situation that al-Qaida can build a strong base."

Said it's time for new leadership that "respects the fact that governors are out there fighting to try to build a decent education system, create jobs, make sure that we can give families a chance to have a decent way of living. And that we get governments off the backs of mothers and fathers who ought to be raising kids without a whole lot of government interference."



SEN. JOHN MCCAIN
R-Arizona

On the home mortgage crisis, said that "we've got to return to the principle that you don't lend money to people that can't pay it back." Said there are also "some greedy people on Wall Street that perhaps need to be punished." "A mortgage should be one page and there should be big letters at the bottom that say, 'I understand this document.'"

Supported California's request for federal global warming waiver; supported nuclear power. "The state of California and the state of Arizona, we Westerners care very much about our environment and we want to act. And it's no secret that I have disagreed with the Bush administration in not being more active in addressing the issue of climate change."

Noted his 2006 proposal for a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants is not politically viable today; supports deportation for alien criminals; says "we will secure the borders first. ... I know how to do that. I come from a border state, where we know about building walls, and vehicle barriers, and sensors, and all of the things necessary."

Said he put his political career on the line to help the country avoid failure in Iraq. Said he's willing to stay for "some period of time," as the United States has done in other countries. "We've got troops right next door in Kuwait. We'll probably have them there for a long time. We have troops in Bosnia. We've had troops in South Korea for some 50 years."

Said he led the largest squadron in the United States Navy, "and I did it out of patriotism, not for profit." Said he has been involved in every major national security crisis in the last 20 years. "I have the vision and the knowledge and the background to take on the transcendent issue of the 21st century, which is radical Islamic extremism."



REP. RON PAUL
R-Texas

Said cutting spending should be the priority. "That's what nobody here talks about. Where do you cut spending if you want to spend some money? We need lower taxes, less regulations, and we need to free up the market. We can't expect the government to do everything."

Said "California should do what they want" on global warming. "But one thing that hasn't been emphasized here ... when we're dealing with the environment ... is property rights. We neglected during the industrial revolution property rights, and governments and big corporations got together and colluded. And that's what has to be reversed."

Not asked to speak on immigration. On previous occasions has supported abolishment of birthright citizenship and opposed education, health care and welfare for illegal immigrants. Also has opposed guest worker visas for Mexican laborers.

"We were elected in the year 2000 to have a humble foreign policy and not police the world. ... Now we're bogged down in another war and we're bankrupting the country."

Said questions about whether the president is ready to lead on the economy miss the point. "The Constitution is very clear that the president is commander in chief of the military, but ... the president is not supposed to manage and run the economy. The people are supposed to do this."



MITT ROMNEY
Former Massachusetts governor

Said infrastructure investment helps the economy, but not in the short term. "An economic stimulus plan has to put money in the hands of consumers and businesses and homeowners now, and the reason we're asking Congress to move within 30 days is we want to get that out there now so the economy doesn't tip down."

Supported nuclear power, other alternative energy and states' rights to enact global warming regulations. Argued that emission caps will "impose on the American people a huge new effective tax: 20 percent on utilities, 50 cents a gallon for gasoline. ... I side with states being able to make their own decisions, even if I don't always agree with the decisions they make."

Opposes amnesty for illegal immigrants, supports "humane and compassionate" deportation based on family circumstances. "There are millions throughout the world who want to come to this country legally. It's a wonderful privilege. But those that have come here illegally should not be given a better deal."

Said he never supported a specific timetable for exit from Iraq, as McCain has suggested. "I will not pull our troops out ... unless we have success in Iraq. I'm opposed to setting a specific date for withdrawal."

Said people look to governors for leadership, not senators. "Senators and congressmen are fine people, but they're legislators. They sit in committees. ... I think in order to have somebody fix our economy and strengthen it ... you've got to have somebody who's actually done some work in the private economy, who understands how it works."