



Republican Town Hall: CNN's Reality Check Team inspects the claims

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John Kasich, Jeb Bush and Donald Trump gathered in South Carolina for CNN's Republican Town Hall on Thursday, and CNN's Reality Check team spent the night putting their statements and assertions to the test.

The team of reporters, researchers and editors across CNN listened throughout the event and selected key statements, rating them true; mostly true; true, but misleading; false; or it's complicated.

John Kasich

Reality Check: Kasich on Obamacare and health care costs

By Tami Luhby, CNNMoney

Kasich may have agreed to expand Medicaid, but he's no fan of Obamacare, which he said must be replaced because it's too costly.

"The problem with Obamacare is it does not control the cost of health care. They continue to escalate," he said.

One of Obamacare's goals is to curtail the growth of health care spending. President Barack Obama often ties his signature health reform program to the slowdown in the health care spending growth, which has been at or near historic lows in recent years.

But is it due to Obamacare? Not so much, experts say.

A 2013 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Altarum Institute, a health research group, concluded that about three-quarters of the slowdown was due to the lackluster economy. The rest

stems from efforts to keep spending down, including cost-containment measures introduced in Obamacare.

Also, health care spending is once again on the rise -- and it's expected to continue to accelerate over the next decade -- in large part because of expanded coverage under Obamacare. Health care spending in the U.S. is projected to have increased 5.3% in 2014, according to federal estimates. It's the first time the rate would exceed 5% since 2007.

Verdict: **True.**

Jeb Bush

Reality Check: Bush on ISIS having an Indiana-sized caliphate

By Ryan Browne, CNN National Security Producer

While criticizing Obama's handling of the counter ISIS campaign, Bush said that the President's failure to retain U.S. troops in Iraq after 2012 led to ISIS having a caliphate "the size of Indiana."

Bush said, "When he did not renew the agreement with the Iraqi government to allow for troops to stay there, that void was filled by sectarianism that once again kind of unraveled Iraq and it created ISIS. Al Qaeda in Iraq was devastated. It was gone. But a recreation of a caliphate the size of Indiana between Syria and Iraq is because we pulled back and the Iraqis did not have a sustainable kind of national government."

At the time, the administration said it withdrew troops due to the failure to reach a status of forces agreement with the Iraqi government that would protect U.S. forces in Iraq from legal prosecution.

While many analysts agree that al Qaeda in Iraq was largely defeated in 2012 and that the withdrawal of U.S. troops contributed to instability that facilitated the rise of ISIS, did ISIS really have a caliphate the "size of Indiana?"

According to the defense research firm IHS Jane's Intelligence Review, in December 2015, ISIS controlled 30,116 square miles.

The state of Indiana is 36,418 square miles. The area controlled by ISIS in Iraq and Syria is therefore 83% the size of Indiana.

But ISIS has lost significant territory in recent months, losing the city of Ramadi to the Iraqi army and the town of Sinjar to Kurdish forces backed by U.S. airstrikes.

In January 2015, IHS Jane's said ISIS controlled 35,282 miles squared, which is much closer to the size of Indiana.

Verdict: **Mostly True.**

Reality Check: Bush on Russia's presence in the Middle East

By Laura Koran, CNN

Criticizing Obama's strategy in Syria, Bush said the U.S. has "allowed Russia to establish a military presence back in the Middle East for the first time in 40 years. We've done this in a way that is devastating."

In fact, Russia has maintained a close military relationship with Syria for over 40 years, operating a naval base in the port city of Tartus since 1971.

The facility was established to receive weapons shipments and remained under Russian control after the fall of the Soviet Union, according to an explainer from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Russia's presence in Syria has grown since the start of the civil war there, particularly since it began launching operations from the Khmeimim airbase near Latakia. But Russia's military presence in Syria long predates the Obama administration.

Verdict: **False.**

Reality Check: Bush on Florida's concealed carry law and gun violence reduction

By Sonam Vashi, CNN

Bush said, "As governor of the state of Florida, I was A+ rated for eight years in a row. I believe that we should protect the rights of law-abiding citizens and focus our efforts on putting bad people away that use guns illegally for a long while. That's what we did in Florida. We have 1.5 million concealed weapon permit holders in Florida, which is double the next state, and we have also seen double digit reductions in gun violence because, if you commit a crime with a gun in Florida, you're going to prison."

Bush has a lifetime A+ rating from the National Rifle Association, according to campaign communications director Tim Miller. That includes his eight years as governor, so that claim is **true**.

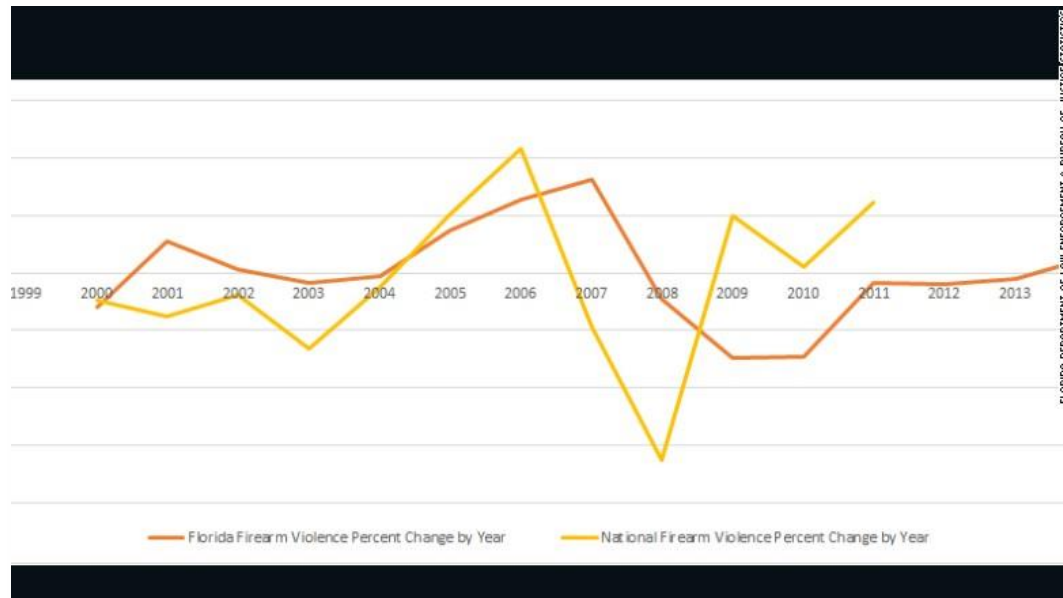
Florida does indeed have more than 1.5 million concealed weapon permit holders. We looked around to find the next highest state: Texas had about 826,000 active concealed carry license holders as of 2014. But Pennsylvania has 1.06 million active carry permits as of last year, according to Politifact. Based on that figure, Bush is **false** when claiming that Florida has double the number of concealed carry permits as the next highest state.

Using data from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, we looked at the reductions in firearm-involved violent crime across the state during Bush's tenure (from 1999 to 2007) and after. Importantly, we cannot say how much Bush's policies, national conditions, or population growth affected these numbers. According to the raw numbers, gun violence in Bush's first term fluctuated, and then steadily increased in his second term to a peak of 36,000 incidents of gun violence in 2007, a 37% increase since 1999.

After Bush left office, crime did begin to fall, slowly at first and then by 15% (double-digits) in both 2009 and 2010. We can't attribute any of these changes in gun violence to any one cause. However, Bush attributes the decline to laws he signed, specifically the "10-20-Life" law, which

was enacted in 1999 and issues a minimum 10-year sentence for anyone who takes out a gun while committing a crime, 20 years for pulling the trigger, and 25 years to life for injuring or killing someone with a gun.

Florida did see double-digit reductions in gun violence in the years after Bush's term ended, almost 10 years after the "10-20-Life" law was enacted, but both the increase and decrease in Florida echoed national trends, seen in the graph below. We'll rate this last claim as **it's complicated**.



Reality Check: Bush on wages

By Kate Grise, CNN

Bush told the crowd that government workers are getting paid more than their counterparts in the private sector.

"Government workers in Washington get paid 40% more than their equivalent workers than the private sector," Bush said.

There are many different salaries and metrics we could compare, such as looking only at an employee's salary or their total compensation including salary and benefits. We'll break down the numbers a couple of different ways.

According to a report published by Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, which looks at data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the average federal civilian government worker's wages were 49% more than average workers in the private sector in 2014. When comparing total compensation, however, that figure is closer to 78%.

The average civilian federal government worker -- employees not affiliated with the military -- made \$84,153. Meanwhile, the average private sector employee made \$56,350 in wages alone.

According to a 2012 report from the Congressional Budget Office, federal employees make 16% more than their private sector counterparts when total compensation is taken into account. The same report says that federal workers only make 2% more than those in the private sector where wages are concerned.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the average federal worker has a higher level of education than the average private sector worker, which affects the average salary of a group.

Those with higher levels of education, a master's or professional degree or a doctorate, are likely to make a higher salary in the private sector, but their benefits would be slightly better if they were federal employees, according to the CBO report.

If you have a high school diploma, you'll make a higher salary and receive better benefits in the private sector. Those with a bachelor's degree make about the same salary, but receive 46% higher benefits by working for the federal government.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, estimated in 2010 that even when controlling for other factors, including education level and job type, "federal employees earn approximately 30% to 40% more in total compensation (wages and benefits) than comparable private-sector workers."

In direct contrast to these reports, the Federal Salary Council, which is made up of federal employee union representatives and other compensation experts, reported that salaries of federal employees were 35% lower than those of employees with similar private sector jobs as of the end of 2015.

In 2012, the Government Accountability Office reviewed key studies dating back to 2005, and said that each study's findings differ because they all use different approaches, methods and data. "Their findings should not be taken in isolation as the answer to how federal pay and total compensation compares with other sectors," the report said.

Verdict: **It's complicated** because the studies are not conclusive one way or the other.

Donald Trump

Reality Check: Donald Trump, self-funder

By Theodore Schleifer, CNN

It is a claim Trump has made again and again, and he repeated it again tonight to Anderson Cooper.

"I'm a self-funder," he told Cooper. "I'm not taking any money, OK?"

After largely resisting sinking significant money into his run for the presidency, the billionaire has now loaned his campaign \$12.6 million. But though he says he does not actively solicit donations, he has collected another \$6.5 million in donations, according to federal elections records.

So one-third of the funds raised for Trump's campaign did not come from his own pocket. And he is indeed accepting money.

Verdict: **False.**

Reality Check: Trump on executive actions

By Eve Bower, CNN

Trump criticized Obama's use of unilateral action on certain domestic issues, saying, "Obama goes around signing executive orders. He can't even get along with the Democrats. He goes around signing all these executive orders. It's a basic disaster. You can't do it."

He compared this to President Ronald Reagan, who, Trump said, "ran a pretty good ship" and described the Reagan era as a time when "the country wasn't based on executive orders."

According to [The American Presidency Project](#), which tracks the executive orders issued by all American presidents, as of Thursday, Obama has issued 230 executive orders total, or an average of less than 33 orders per year he has been in office. Reagan issued significantly more: a total of 381 during his eight years in office, or an average of 48 per year he served as president.

But the mere number of orders issued by a given president says little about the unilateral impact that he has had on the nation's policies. In addition to executive orders, which carry the force of law, a president may also sign statements, make presidential proclamations and issue executive actions, among other efforts. Much of Obama's policy impact has come in the form of these other types of authority, notably including his 2014 action to ease deportation threats against millions of undocumented immigrants, and his 2016 action to narrow the "gun show loophole."

The Brookings Institution has found that while the use of executive orders can increase partisanship, "in reality, presidents have substantial authority to issue such orders."

In January, when Trump was asked if he would also make use of executive orders if he were elected president, Trump said that Obama was setting a "precedent."

Because he wrongly implied that the Obama administration has used executive orders more frequently than the Reagan administration did, and because he implied Obama was beyond his rights in doing so, we rate this claim **false**.

Reality Check: Trump on health care premiums rising

By Chip Grabow and Kevin Bohn, CNN

Trump targeted Obamacare with the claim it has resulted in significant increases in health care premiums.

"Obamacare, as you know, is a disaster. Your rates are going up 25, 35, 45, 55%."

It's a claim Trump has made several times before in his campaign. But an October 2015 analysis of premium changes from 2015 to 2016 by the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation, a health research organization, shows some slightly different numbers.

Compiling data from health marketplaces in major cities of 50 states and Washington, D.C., KFF used as a benchmark rates from the second-lowest cost plan category known as "Silver." The analysis used a 40-year-old non-smoker making \$30,000 a year as an example.

The year-over-year changes in plan costs varied, with some cities experiencing reductions while others showed increases. The KFF reported the "benchmark premium ranges from -10.6% in Seattle, Washington, to 38.4% in Nashville, Tennessee." The group went on to say "the simple average of the rate changes was 10.1% before accounting for the premium tax credit."

So, looking at individual rate changes in specific cities, there were indeed increased rates as Trump claimed, with the largest increase being 38.4% in Nashville. An increase, yes, but not as high as the 45% and 55% increases Trump alleged. And, in fact, some regions saw rate decreases.

Verdict: **True, but misleading.**