



Jeb! fights to be Last Governor Standing

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Remember when the GOP primary was overflowing with a wealth of viable candidates and looked like it might not result in the most miserable election year of our lives?

Seems like it's been eons since I was wondering how I'd choose between Bobby Jindal, Scott Walker, and Rick Perry when Ohio's primary rolled around.

And now here we are with only two governors left in a race dominated by a cartoony pinkish-orange toad-person. Until Wednesday it looked like Jeb Bush was going to try to fight Donald Trump while politely letting John Kasich bump him to the back of the pack.

Bush's campaign, of course, bashed Kasich in New Hampshire and continues to do so in South Carolina. But in stump speeches, press appearances, and debates, Jeb has allowed Kasich to poison the Republican well by promoting Obamacare's Medicaid expansion.

Jeb said nothing when Kasich lied about Obamacare expansion at the Jan. 28 debate, and missed another golden opportunity when Kasich — who expanded Medicaid unilaterally after vetoing a legislative ban on the policy — griped about executive overreach at the Feb. 6 debate.

After Kasich came in second in New Hampshire on Tuesday (finishing with a lower percentage of votes than Jon Huntsman got in 2012), Jeb began emphasizing Kasich's embrace of Obamacare as proof Jeb's the more conservative governor.

In Saturday's debate, Jeb pounced on Kasich's reply to a question about his Obamacare expansion:

“Expanding Obamacare is what we’re talking about, and Obamacare’s expansion — even though the federal government is paying for the great majority of it — is creating further debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren,” Jeb said.

“We should be fighting Obamacare, repealing Obamacare, replacing it with something totally different,” Jeb added. Based on Foundation for Government Accountability polling, South Carolina primary voters overwhelmingly oppose Obamacare expansion.

Kasich replied as you might expect: by tying himself into an ever-more-bristly knot and then whining about “negative campaigning.”

“He knows that I’m not for Obamacare, never have been,” Kasich said. Barely 24 hours before Saturday’s debate, Kasich was sneering at Florida Obamacare opponents during a Fox News interview and at South Carolina Obamacare opponents during a campaign stop.

In 2013, Kasich vetoed a ban on Obamacare’s Medicaid expansion, expanded Medicaid unilaterally, and threatened to bankrupt Ohio’s entire Medicaid program if lawmakers didn’t appropriate the resulting Obamacare funds. This is all a matter of public record.

“You know who expanded Medicaid five times, to try to help the folks and give them opportunity so they could rise and get a job? President Ronald Reagan,” Kasich said Saturday night, repeating a talking point former Reagan chief of staff Ed Meese eviscerated more than two years ago.

Kasich’s Obamacare expansion covers working-age adults with no kids and no disabilities. The program includes no work requirements.

Kasich projected 447,000 Ohioans would enroll in his Obamacare expansion by fiscal year 2020. Average **actual enrollment for fiscal year 2016 is 657,000**, according to the Ohio Department of Medicaid.

Kasich says Obamacare expansion will bring \$14 billion of Ohio’s tax dollars back to Ohio in its first seven years. The **actual cost in the first two years was \$6.4 billion**, and that’s new federal deficit spending — not “Ohio money.”

“The people of this country and this state want to see everybody rise, and they want to see unity, and I don’t want to get into all this fighting tonight ’cause the people are frankly sick of the negative campaigning,” Kasich said after Bush pointed to Kasich’s D grade on the latest Cato Institute spending scorecard.

If South Carolina Republicans were paying attention Saturday night, any of the momentum the media’s favorite Republican has from New Hampshire (#Kasixcitement!) should be stomped out in the state’s Feb. 20 primary.