

# Holding ‘Bureaucrats Accountable,’ Pay Reform and Other Ideas From New GOP Presidential Candidates

By [Eric Katz](#)

May 8, 2015

Three new candidates joined the fray for the 2016 Republican nomination for president this week, and have already voiced some interesting ideas regarding the role of the federal government and its employees.

## Role of Government

The most viable of the candidates is former Ark. Gov. Mike Huckabee, who previously ran for president in 2008. In his announcement speech, Huckabee said he was running to make “government accountable to the people who pay for it.” He complained lawmakers and presidential administrations have “supersized the federal bureaucracy” and that “there are things being done at the federal level that should have been left in the hands of the states or even better, the families.”

Huckabee has said in the past the government should step aside to make room for religion.

“I didn’t get into politics because I thought government had a better answer,” Huckabee [said](#) in 1998 while governor. “I got into politics because I knew government didn’t have the real answers, that the real answers lie in accepting Jesus Christ into our lives.”

Ben Carson, a former neurosurgeon at Johns Hopkins University, also entered the race this week and spoke of the outsized role of government during his announcement speech. He noted he was not “an anti-government person by any means,” so long as government was confined to just what the nation’s founders spelled out.

“I think the government, as described in our constitution, is wonderful,” Carson said. But because it has grown beyond that definition, he added, “I think it’s time for the people to rise up and take the government back.”

## Agency Reforms

In his writings and speeches, Huckabee has called for eliminating the Education Department and Internal Revenue Service. The former governor holds a particular abhorrence for the IRS, calling it the “biggest bully in America.”

In his recent book “*God, Guns, Grits and Gravy*,” (St. Martin’s Press) Huckabee devoted a chapter to the IRS and the Transportation Security Agency, writing the agencies are examples of the “ham-fisted, hyper-controlling” state of the U.S. government that has conditioned Americans to “bend over and take it like a prisoner.” He added that the IRS reminded him of a former coach that used to spank him with a paddle.

While Huckabee has outlined few specific policy proposals in his nascent campaign, he has listed on his website the need to “fix the [Veterans Affairs Department] and give our heroes greater choices.”

“We must hold VA hospital officials and government bureaucrats accountable,” Huckabee wrote.

Carson has also been light on specifics, but reiterated a popular refrain to make government more efficient.

“We are going to change the government into something that looks more like a well-run business than a behemoth of inefficiency,” he said during his announcement speech. He also mentioned a desire to cut the excess property owned and leased by the federal government.

## Workforce Initiatives

Carly Fiorina, the only woman to throw her hat in the GOP ring, has proposed the most specific changes for federal employees’ pay and benefits. In an [interview](#) with Yahoo’s Katie Couric this week, the former CEO of Hewlett Packard proposed an overhaul of the civil service pay system.

“The government needs to get off seniority systems and go to meritocracies as well,” Fiorina said. “Pay for performance.” During her unsuccessful 2010 run for Senate in California, Fiorina pledged to fight for “obvious reforms” such as “limiting federal salaries and benefits.”

While most of Huckabee’s rhetoric has been anti-government, he has received criticism from conservative groups for being too friendly to the public sector. During his tenure as governor, Arkansas added 20,000 government jobs, [according to the Cato Institute](#). During his 2008 run for president, Huckabee endorsed a Hillary Clinton-backed idea to create a public service academy.

In his book, however, Huckabee did not have nice things to say about those who work in public service:

Government in Washington is dysfunctional because it’s become the roach motel--people go in, but they never come out. As president I’ll fight for term limits on all three branches of

government. That would help return us to the founders dream that serving the public would be a temporary duty--not a lucrative career with generous pensions and paychecks not available to the people who pay for them.

For now, all three of the candidates remain long shots to win the White House. Their ideas, however, could still permeate the national discourse.