



Fact-checking the Republican Fox Business Network debate

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The fourth GOP presidential debate hosted by Fox Business in Milwaukee focused on the economy, with candidates making claims that didn't always stand up to scrutiny.

(We'll update this story as we add more fact-checks.)

Candidates spent a good portion of the debate bemoaning the tax code and outlining their plans to improve it. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas -- who has pushed to abolish the Internal Revenue Service -- said, "There are more words in the IRS code than there are in the Bible." It's generally accepted that the tax code is about 4 million words long, while the Bible is about 800,000. So Cruz's claim came out True.

Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky said income inequality "seems to be worst in cities run by Democrats." He has a point that one credible study shows a fairly strong correlation between high inequality and a Democratic mayor. But experts say it's a stretch to draw conclusions from this. The claim inflates the actual powers of mayors to shape inequality in their cities and it ignores the role of population size and suburbanization in driving inequality. It also glosses over the fact that metropolitan areas, as opposed to cities, show no such relationship.

We rated Paul's claim Half True.

Some candidates spoke out against raising the minimum wage, including retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson. In support of his point, he said, "Every time we raise the minimum wage, the number of jobless people increases."

However, if you look at the 12-month period following every minimum-wage hike since 1978, joblessness did rise on seven occasions, but it fell on four occasions, undercutting Carson's sweeping claim. In addition, it's not at all clear that a minimum-wage hike was the primary

culprit for the periods in which joblessness rose, since those periods also coincided with broader recessions in the economy. We rated that claim False.

When talk turned to trade, real estate mogul Donald Trump lamented that "We're losing now over \$500 billion a year in terms of imbalance with China." In reality, the United States' 2014 trade deficit with China totaled \$343 billion, and it's expected to be larger in 2015 but not more than \$500 billion. Trump's claim rates Mostly False.

7 p.m. debate

We also fact-checked some claims from the 7 p.m. debate, which featured four candidates with lower poll numbers than the eight who appeared on the main stage at 9 p.m.

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal touted his executive record compared to his competitors, saying: "There's only one of us who's actually cut government spending -- not two, there's one and you're looking at him."

To his credit, a Cato Institute report backs his claim. However, there's more than one way of looking at spending cuts. One other approach that an expert said is valid suggests that Jindal was out-cut by four other governors running for president this cycle (though two of the four have dropped out). Jindal's claim is partially accurate, so we rated it Half True.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie knocked President Barack Obama's record on getting the country out of the economic recession. Christie said the United States is in "the worst recovery from an economic recession since World War II." The truth is it depends on what you measure.

Looking at GDP growth, he's right. Looking at the employment picture, the 2001 recovery was worse. We rated Christie's statement Half True.

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee questioned the motives and origins of "so-called 'Syrian refugees,' " some of whom the United States plans to admit. He said that only one out of five of those who "went into Europe were actually Syrian."

While the claim isn't pulled out of thin air, it's flawed. The statistic represents the three months before the actual influx of Syrian refugees in to Europe, and the four out of five non-Syrians are not purporting to be Syrian. Rather, they came from war-torn countries. Overall, Syrian refugees account for half of all refugees arriving in Europe in 2015 so far. We rated Huckabee's claim Mostly False.