

Transcript of the Republican Univision debate

Here is a transcript of the Republican debate sponsored by Univision and held at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla., on Dec. 9

MODERATOR: Good evening and welcome to the presidential forum. (inaudible) in Spanish at the University of Miami.

Tonight is the Republicans' night. For the first time, seven of the Republican candidates are going to participate tonight in a Spanish forum. This is the opportunity they have to speak directly to 44 million Hispanics, especially to (inaudible) potential Hispanic voters.

It's important because, as the presidential election of 2008 is going to be tight, the Hispanic vote could decide who will be the next president of the United States.

Things have changed so much in this country that no candidate (inaudible) can reach the White House without the Hispanic vote.

For you, for the ones of you that don't speak Spanish, Univision is going to be broadcasting this show in (inaudible) for English-speaking audience tonight you will be able to follow the Republican presidential forum (inaudible) in English provided in (inaudible).

And before we start, there are certain things that we want to explain tonight.

Those are the basic rules.

MODERATOR: All the candidates have accepted the rules of this presidential forum and these are the most important ones. The candidates will not make any opening statements nor will they make any closing statements. Instead, they will address all the questions asked by us, the moderators.

And we also asked them not to ask questions among themselves, and to only answer the questions that we're (inaudible). And maybe if that doesn't happen, we'll have to interrupt them.

Each candidate will have one minute to respond, and 30 seconds to rebuttals, only on a limited discretion of the moderators. A yellow light would advise the candidate that we have 15 seconds left and a red light indicates that their time is up.

All questions will be asked in Spanish and will be simultaneously translated into English for the candidates, who will answer in English. And they are limited to that tonight.

Seven of the eight Republican presidential candidates are here tonight. And, of course, their positions were determined by a previous drawing (inaudible) by their representatives of choice.

MODERATOR: And we'll begin from left to right for the candidates. Let's welcome them.

Please say welcome to Mike Huckabee. He was elected two times as governor of Arkansas. He has a B.A. from Ouachita Baptist University. He attended the Southeast Baptist Theological Seminary from 1976 to 1980. He is married and has three children. (APPLAUSE)

Fred Thompson, the senator for the United States from Tennessee since 1994 to 2003. He was also the assistant attorney general for one term. He obtained a law degree from Vanderbilt University (inaudible).

Thank you for coming.

Mitt Romney was the governor of Massachusetts between 2003 and 2007. He was also the executive director of the Winter Olympics that were in Salt Lake City. He also (inaudible) university. He is married and has five children and 10 grandchildren. (APPLAUSE)

Rudy Giuliani was Mayor of New York City for eight years. He also was an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District. He obtained a law degree from New York University. He is married and has three children. (APPLAUSE)

Ron Paul is a Texas Representative. He has been elected six times. He practiced as an OB/GYN for almost 30 years. He obtained his medical degree at Duke University. He is married and has five children and 17 grandchildren. (APPLAUSE)

John McCain is a Senator for the United States from Arizona since 1986. He also was a federal representative for four years for that same state. He has a bachelor's degree from the United States Military Academy.

Thank you for coming. He is married and has seven children and four grandchildren. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Well, we want to thank all the candidates that are participating in this forum. Thank you so much for coming. And, of course, on behalf of all the millions of Hispanics and Latin Americans who are watching us tonight, we want to thank you. And let's start with a question.

MODERATOR: Precisely, we're going to start with one question for several of the candidates. The first one's for Mayor Giuliani. The first one is, President Bush obtained more than 40 percent of the Hispanic vote in 2004. I'm talking about Hispanic votes. But in the Congressional elections last year, only 30 percent of Hispanics voted Republican. So the question is: To what do you attribute the declining of support among Hispanics to Republicans?

GIULIANI: That's the whole idea of being here, and it's the whole idea of reaching out to the entire country. I think I understand in great depth the importance of the Hispanic vote. I think it helped elect me mayor of New York City on two occasions.

And I realize the complexity and the diversity of the Hispanic community. It's very important. Very important to the present and the future of this country.

I approach the Hispanic community the same way I do all communities. I think if you want to be president of the United States, the purpose of being president of the United States is to create a better future, a brighter future, more safety, more prosperity, more jobs, better education.

These are the things that Hispanics are looking for in the next president of the United States. In short, they're looking for leadership and somebody who can handle, if we have to handle a crisis, and I think that I've demonstrated that.

MODERATOR: The next question is for Governor Romney. The same thing: Why has the Hispanic support for Republicans declined?

ROMNEY: You know, I think Republicans went to Washington with the expectations of the whole world that we would change Washington. And in many respects, as has been said by many people, Washington changed Republicans. And when Republicans act like Democrats, America loses.

Republicans spent too much money, and we let down our ethical standards. And so, Hispanics, along with other people in this country, want to see change.

I (inaudible) the Republican Party can connect with Hispanic voters, like other Americans, because there are some peculiar connections between our party and the Hispanic people.

One, Hispanic Americans serve in the military and care about our military. We salute them for their service right now. And we'll strengthen the military. If I'm president, I'm going to add at least 100,000 troops to our military.

Secondly, Hispanic Americans are entrepreneurs and business people. And I know how to build our economy. I'm going to keep our taxes down and make sure that our economy grows and thrives.

And, third, Hispanic Americans are family-oriented and people of faith. I'm going to strengthen America's families. And so my platform, this Republican platform, connects with Spanish -- Hispanic Americans from across the country. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Huckabee, how do you explain the decline of support to Republicans by Hispanics?

HUCKABEE: I think Hispanics want the same thing everybody wants. They want jobs. They want education. They want to know that they're going to be able to live with freedom. If the Republicans only got 30 percent of the vote, somehow we didn't do a very good job of communicating that that's what we would provide in terms of opportunity and fairness.

It says more about our party and our need to reach out than it does about the Hispanic population of this country. If we're really serious about truly saying we want more than 30 percent of the vote, then as we look at issues like education we'll understand that while the dropout rate from high school is 30 percent among all populations, it's 50 percent among Hispanics.

We've got to change that by creating personalized education that focuses on perpetuating what's good for students, not just making what's good for the school.

There's also issues and disparities between diabetes and other issues of health.

So I think, if our policies reflect lifting people up, we'll get the vote. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

Senator McCain, how do you explain that decrease in support for the Republicans?

McCAIN: First of all, could I mention that I've been proud to represent a state in the United States Senate that has a very large Hispanic population. It's a border state. I've been honored to have as much as 70 percent of the Hispanic vote when I was re-elected last time.

I've been honored by Hispanic organizations. And I understand these issues and the challenges that they face. And I'm proud to have developed the relationship that I have with the Hispanic community in my state and in this country.

I'll give you some straight talk. I think some of the rhetoric that many Hispanics hear about illegal immigration makes some of them believe that we are not in favor nor seek the support of Hispanic citizens in this country. (APPLAUSE)

Hispanics are pro-small business, they are pro-life, they are pro-religion, they are pro-less regulation, pro-less spending, pro-military, they're serving in incredible numbers in Iraq as we speak today. I had the opportunity of visiting with many of them...

MODERATOR: Thank you, Senator.

McCAIN: ... over Thanksgiving. We can not only regain, but we can get a majority support of Hispanics in America for our party.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Senator. (APPLAUSE)

Senator Thompson, in a recent survey from Pew Hispanic Center, published this past week, only 23 percent of Hispanics favor the Republican Party. What are you going to do -- what can you offer to recover the lost ground among Hispanics?

THOMPSON: Well, I think that we do share a lot in this country, whether we're Hispanic or whether we are not Hispanic. I think we have some of the basic values. I think Republicans got away from those values.

You talked about Congress a minute ago. Congress' record rating with the American people is at an all-time low. It's not just in the Hispanic community. It's in the other communities that traditionally supported us. We were too often affiliated with matters of corruption in the United States Congress. We are spending the next generation's money, those yet to be born. We are spending their money, with no restraint.

We need to stand up for the values that we are supposed to believe in. We need to stand up for a strong national defense. We need to stand up for judges who will obey the law and follow the law, instead of making it up as it goes along, and we need to stand strong for issues of pro-life, and support traditional values that are important to our families. This is very important to Hispanics as well as non-Hispanics. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Congressman Hunter, I want to ask you the same question. How are you going to think (inaudible) you're going to recover the lost ground among Hispanics?

HUNTER: Well, you know what? I understand.

I talked to Donna Shalala, and she said actually a number of young people are going to register to vote tonight, and I want them to register for our party, for the Republican Party.

And I'll tell you a great reason to be a Republican. And it's a story that's told 90 miles away and 1,500 miles away, because 90 miles away, in 1961, the Cuban freedom fighters fought on the beach in Cuba against Castro's forces.

And a Democrat administration let their aircraft carrier sit there, while those freedom fighters were machine-gunned, because they felt there was too much pressure coming from the United Nations -- either machine-gunned or captured.

Many years later, 1,500 miles away, in a little place called El Salvador, a Republican president, Ronald Reagan, provided that little shield around that government, while they stood up and had free elections and brought freedom to El Salvador.

It's a story of two parties. It's a story of the party of freedom. That's the Republican party. That's why I would register Republican and support our party this year. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Senator Paul, the same question: The Republican Party lost some ground. Only 23 percent support their party. What are you going to do to recover the lost ground?

PAUL: You know, if anybody votes for the Republican Party, they're voting for conservative values. They're voting for less government, not more government.

In the last seven years, we've gotten a lot more government.

You know, in the year 2000, we ran on a pro-peace policy. We were condemning Clinton for warmongering, for nation-building and policing the world.

And we did exactly the opposite. Now we're mired down in the Middle East.

And Hispanics, like all Americans, are tired of it. They're pro-peace. America should be pro-peace, not pro-war.

The war has created so much expenditures. We're spending our money overseas instead of here. We're neglecting our needs here. We're bombing and building bridges overseas and we're neglecting our bridges here at home.

Hispanics, like everybody else, want change in our foreign policy. They want change with our budget. We're support to be the fiscal conservatives. We're not. So they leave the party, just like everybody else. This is why we lost the election last year, is because we didn't stand by our principles of pro-peace and pro-liberty and pro-America.

MODERATOR: Governor Romney, (inaudible) to be here and (inaudible). Do you think that you're taking a risk to come here to lose support from the more conservative base in your party?

ROMNEY: I don't think so at all. I think Americans across the country of all ethnicities recognize that we are a great, pluralistic society. That statue you have on the screen behind us, that light that shine out for the entire world said, This is an unusual land. This is a land that welcomes people of all backgrounds, of all ethnicities, of all nations; welcomes them here to this great land. (APPLAUSE)

And she said that God gave to the individual certain inalienable rights. And that changed the relationship between the state and the citizen.

It said that the citizen was the sovereign and the state was not. And that changed the entire world. People came here for opportunity. And our party is a party of opportunity. We stand for strength in our home. We stand for strength in our economy. We stand for strength in our military, so we defend our values, and so of course Republicans are going to come and speak to Hispanic Americans in the language they understand best, so we can get their votes and they can understand that we are the party of strength and the party of freedom.

MODERATOR: Mayor Giuliani, I heard you laughing when this question was asked. What's your answer?

GIULIANI: Don't see any risk at all in coming before a Hispanic audience. Hispanic Americans are Americans, just as much as all other Americans. They have the same values, the same interests.

I learned that being mayor I think of the largest Hispanic city maybe not in the hemisphere, but in the United States, and a Hispanic city of great diversity and great strength. And what I learned is, we have very common values. Hispanics have a tremendous interest in giving more freedom back to people, giving more people -- giving people more of a chance to decide on the education of their child.

That's why I think school choice would be a very good thing to do for Hispanics, for Hispanic parents, for all parents. The decision on where the child goes to school should primarily be made by the parent, and the parent should decide what school the child goes to, not the government bureaucrat.

That's one of many, many things that really unites what Hispanics want and need and what all parents want and need, which is more control over their child's education. And that's something that I would fight very hard to bring about.

MODERATOR: Governor Huckabee, is there a risk standing up here (inaudible)?

HUCKABEE: Well, I think the great risk is not so much that we would come. The far greater risk is if we didn't. And it's not just that we would offend or perhaps insult the Hispanic audience of this country. I think it would insult our own party. It would insult every voter in this country.

To act like that somehow we've become so arrogant that there's any segment of our population that we're either afraid to speak to, hear their questions, or somehow that we don't think that they're as important as another group. And it's why I think whether it's an African American audience, a Hispanic audience, a union audience, as Republicans, we ought to be more than willing to sit down, even with people with whom we might know there are disagreements.

And I think, frankly, it's important for us to be here. It's important that you gave us this opportunity. And I want to say thanks for letting us have this audience on Univision. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Tonight, your answers are being translated into Spanish, interpreted (inaudible). Thirty-one million people in the United States speak Spanish here. The census shows that. We're going to start with Senator McCain. Do you think that there would be a value -- a practical value of making

English the official language in this country?

McCAIN: I think the most practical value is to make English used by all Americans and all citizens, and all who come here. The only way... (APPLAUSE)

The only way we move up the economic ladder from the bottom rung is to know English. And I would emphasize the importance of every person who comes to this country to become a citizen and enjoy its liberties and beauty is to learn English. And I will do everything I can to help them do that. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Congressman Paul, what would be the practical value of English as an official language?

PAUL: Well, it's practical because we can all understand each other. I sometimes think that those who attack bilingualism sometimes are jealous, and we feel inferior, because we're not capable.

But we should have one language. But we, as federal officials, as a congressman or a president, we only have authority over the federal government. So I think all federal things should be in English. But when it comes to bilingualism in schools or the states, under our Constitution, it really is permissible.

And the states can decide that. But under the conditions that we have today, I think it is good and proper to have one language, which would be English, for all legal matters at the national level. But this doesn't preclude bilingualism or whatever in private use or in education or in local government. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: The next question comes from our users of the Web page of Univision that come; 85 percent of the questions posted by the users were regarding immigration.

Some of you -- that's a question for one user -- some of you oppose reform paving the way to granting undocumented aliens legal status. What do you think should be done with the 12 millions of undocumented aliens that live in the United States?

We're going to start with Mayor Giuliani.

GIULIANI: The first thing that has to be done is we have to end illegal immigration. If we don't end illegal immigration, we're really going to risk legal immigration. We should end illegal immigration at the border, because it can't be really dealt with internally.

We should do it by having a fence, a technological fence, as well as a physical fence, but the technological fence is more important. It should be used to alert the Border Patrol of the people coming to the border, and we should stop people from coming in.

Then we should have a tamper-proof ID card that everybody can get who wants to come into the United States legally. We should accomplish that.

When we accomplish that, when we have control of our borders, when we preserve the legality of immigration, we can then turn to the people that are here. We can have them get the tamper-proof ID card. The people that come forward can sign up. They can pay taxes, and then the people who don't are the people who are really the cause of concern. Those people should be expelled from the United States if they don't already leave.

But the people who want to come forward should be allowed to come forward. But we can't do that until we control legal immigration. Otherwise the illegal problem will increase dramatically. And I think that's something that we've all learned by traveling around the country over the last year, two years, and looking at this. So you have to end illegal immigration, or certainly get substantial control over it, and then you can move forward with sensible resolutions to the people that are here.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mayor. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Huckabee, what to do with the 12 million of undocumented that already live in the United States?

HUCKABEE: Well, I agree with the mayor that the first step is a secure border, because otherwise nothing really matters.

But I do think the pathway has to include people going to the back, not the front of the line. There can't be an amnesty policy, because that's an insult to all the people who waited, sometimes, ridiculously, for years, just to be able to make the transition here.

I think a reasonable window of time in which a person would go back to the native country, start the process, but the real challenge is that our government, which has failed miserably in all of this -- it's got to get its act together.

If you can get an American Express card in two weeks, it shouldn't take seven years to get a work permit to come to this country in order to work on a farm. (APPLAUSE)

So if our government is incapable of making that process in that length of time, then we should do it in a way to outsource it.

And here's why: When people come to this country, they shouldn't fear. They shouldn't live in hiding. They ought to have their heads up, because the one thing about being an American is, we believe every

person ought to have his or her head up and proud, and nobody should have to be in hiding because they're illegal when our government ought to make it so that people can reasonably come here in a legal fashion. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Governor.

Senator Thompson, we were preparing this forum, and we found a survey from Los Angeles Times that said that 60 percent of the voters in the United States think that -- they are in favor of granting legal status to undocumented aliens if they meet certain criteria.

Why, if the majority supports that, why not support that idea?

THOMPSON: Because we have to enforce our borders, and we have to uphold the law. There are millions of people who have stood in line in embassies around the world, United States embassies, waiting to become American citizens, waiting to become legal residents of the United States of America. Some places, such as Hong Kong, I read it takes an average of 13 years to go through that process. The legal process needs to be reformed, indeed.

But when they finally come here, and when they are joined by those people in Latin America who have often fought tyranny, who have fought against the Castro regime, who have come here and risked their lives to become United States citizens, when all those people come here, they become a part of us; they become a part of our family.

It would disrespect them if we said other people who had not obeyed the law and had not gone through the process, to set them above them and to give them special status above those who have obeyed the law and fought so hard to become good American citizens and legal residents. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Romney, the question is: Why not legalize some undocumented aliens if they comply with the requirements, if they meet certain requirements?

ROMNEY: You know, I have the occasion to talk to people who have loved ones that are hoping to come to this country, to be reunited with family members. And they're staying in their home countries applying legally. I believe that those people ought to be the first ones to get to come to this country. Those who have come illegally, in my view, should be given the opportunity to get in line with everybody else, but there should be no special pathway for those that have come here illegally to jump ahead of the line or to be come permanent residents or citizens. They should be treated like everybody else who wants to come to this country.

I think we ought to secure our border, we ought to have an employment verification system to know who's here legally and illegally, and recognize that legal immigration is an extraordinary source of great capability and vitality for our country. We welcome the cultures that come here, the education, the work ethic, the family values. We're going to protect legal immigration. At the same time, we're going to enforce the law, show that we're a nation of laws, and welcome the people who have been standing in line first.

Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Congressman Hunter, why not support the legalization?

HUNTER: Did you ask the same question?

MODERATOR: OK, why you're not support that idea?

HUNTER: Listen, when I was -- when I came back from Vietnam, I was a practicing lawyer in the barrio. I was the only lawyer there, and I never turned away a family that came in and needed help.

But I told them a couple of things. One thing is, you have to be here legally, because the first thing you've got to learn in this country is the rule of law. And the second thing is, you have to make sure that your kids learn English, because that is the American opportunity.

Now, in 1983, we gave an amnesty, and when we gave that amnesty, 3 million people came in who were allowed to stay in who were here illegally. We said at that point, no more, and we're not going to let anybody else come in.

After that, 12 million more people came in. If we give an amnesty to this next batch of 12 million people, you will have a third wave of people coming in expecting to catch the third amnesty.

You know, this lady behind me represents a lot of things. One is welcoming immigrants to America. The other is the rule of law. We have to establish the rule of law, and people who are here illegally have to go home. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Senator McCain, you co-authored a bill that would have opened a pathway for legalization of undocumented aliens. It was not approved. It was not passed in Congress. So do you think that you're going to introduce a new bill including a pathway to gain legal status?

McCAIN: I would do most anything to try to solve this compelling problem.

I come from a state where illegal immigration has caused enormous problems, whether it be shootouts on the freeway or broken borders or destroyed wildlife refuges.

And I thought my job, and I believe my job, as a senator from a state on the border, is to get in the arena, not stand by and complain or say no to everything, but get in the arena.

I learned that Americans want the border secured first. That's what we will do.

But I'll say to you what I said at the last debate before a non-Hispanic audience. And that is, we have to address this issue with compassion and love, because these are human beings.

Of course, no one goes ahead of the line. Of course no one who has broken our laws can be rewarded to do so. Of course there can't be amnesty.

But I want to tell you, brave Hispanics have served this country around the world.

They have served in the Vietnam War. And I'll take you down to the Vietnam War Memorial, and show you the names engraved in black granite.

I will take you to Iraq today and, as I was over Thanksgiving, and introduce you to brave young Hispanics who are serving our country. Some of them, their parents came here illegally.

We cannot reward illegal behavior. We have to fix the borders. We cannot allow this nation to be inhumane or without love and compassion.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Senator. Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

Governor Romney, some days ago you fired a company that used to take care of your landscaping because supposedly they were hiring undocumented workers.

The question is this, did you report, officially, that the people or the company to immigration authorities? And do you think that should others report undocumented aliens, the people that you suspect are undocumented?

ROMNEY: You know, we're a very compassionate people. We're also a people who follow the law. And the landscaper at my home is an old friend, and when he made a mistake the first time, I told him in no uncertain terms, you have to make sure that anybody that works on my property and walks on my property is a legal individual.

And he did his best, but he made a mistake. And apparently, two people he had there were not legal. And I told him that's it, and we terminated that relationship. And I think everybody in the country understands who those folks are. It became a big news story.

But let's underscore something here, which is that employers like this landscape company, and he's Hispanic American, he doesn't have a way to determine whether the people he's hiring are legal or illegal. Isn't it amazing in this country, with the fact that American Express or Visa or Mastercard can tell you that fast whether the card is authorized or not.

We don't know who's here legally or not. That's why we need an employment verification system to identify the fact that legal aliens that come here are legal, are entitled to work. And that's something I'm going to get done so our employers know who's here legally and we welcome people who want to come work in this country.

Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Senator Thompson, there are still millions of children that were born here in the United States that at least have one undocumented parent. The (inaudible) have separated them from the parents, and they are American citizens.

Do these children have the right not to be separated from their parents?(APPLAUSE)

THOMPSON: Well, congratulations. That's the first question that's got

applause tonight, so it must be a very good one.

(LAUGHTER)

The -- our courts have ruled that such children, such babies born here are United States citizens. That's part of the 14th Amendment as has been interpreted by the courts, as I understand it.

That's for starters.

I believe that the concentration should not be on the concern of waiting until that child grows up and serves as an anchor baby, as we hear so much talk about. I believe the concern should be chain migration. Right now, we have a situation where people can bring in spouses, children, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers and so forth. I think that people should be able to serve as a basis for the bringing in of their spouses and of their children, but I do not think there should be endless chain migration.

So I think that is the issue to focus on, and not innocent children who are born here not of their own accord and who our courts have said our United States citizens. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Senator McCain, the same question.

MODERATOR: The American children, do they have the right not to be separated from their parents because of (inaudible)?

McCAIN: When we failed to pass immigration reform through the Congress of the United States it was a colossal failure. And, as a result of that, we have all kinds of different problems -- the problem you talk about, people who have been here for many years, people who have not been here a very long time.

We have cities and towns and others declaring sanctuaries; others the opposite.

And because of our failure at the federal level, we have had this incredible problems which are spawned by it, because we failed.

The message of our failure is they want the border secured first. And we must secure the borders first, and then we move on to all of these other issues which many of them are heart wrenching and humanitarian. Very tough decisions.

But once we secure the borders, I'm convinced.

But until we get the borders secured, the lesson we learned was that they aren't ready to address almost any other aspect of this issue. And I regret that.

But, as president of the United States, I will secure the borders...

MODERATOR: Thank you.

McCAIN: ... have the governors certify it, and then we'll move forward with all of these issues.
(APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Romney, we would like to know -- see what your opinion -- what's going to happen to the children who are being separated from their families?

ROMNEY: We're going to finally have a system that welcomes people here legally, and that says that those that have come here illegally are invited to get in line with everybody else.

And the Constitution, as Senator Thompson has indicated, indicates that those that are born here do become United States citizens by virtue of being born here.

But if they're born here from parents who come across the border illegally and bring them here illegally, in my view, we should not adopt, then, these chain migration policies that say, you've got a child here that's a U.S. citizen, and the whole family can come in.

That, in my opinion, is a mistake.

We are a nation of laws. And you're correctly going through each part of immigration policy here. But let's underscore this one more time: We are, in this audience, almost every person here, an individual who came to this country because it's a land of opportunity and liberty.

We also, because we have laws, can have opportunity and liberty. We're going to enforce the laws. Welcoming people here -- we're not going to cut off immigration; we're going to keep immigration alive and thriving.

But we're going to end the practice of illegal immigration. It's not inhumane. It's humanitarian. It's compassionate. We're going to end illegal immigration to protect legal immigration.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

ROMNEY: Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: The vast majority of Hispanics, four out of five, are either legal residents or American citizens. Many of them feel affected by the negative tone of the immigration debate. How would you -- what would you do to curb this anti-Hispanic sentiment?

MODERATOR: First of all, Congressman Hunter...

HUNTER: You know, I represent a district in San Diego, California and Imperial County, California, and that county for many, many years is a majority Hispanic and two-to-one Democrat. And I'm known as the guy who built the double-border fence that lowered the crime rate so dramatically, that stopped all the drug trucks from coming through, that stopped the smuggling of people and narcotics by more than 90 percent.

You know what you do? You look people in the eye and you talk to them frankly.

I would say this: I got more votes from the Hispanic community -- known as the guy who built the border fence -- from the Hispanic community, than anybody running for office, whether it was President Clinton on a presidential year, or one of the local or the state assemblyman or U.S. Senators.

That means that the Hispanic community in the United States does not agree with the idea of having open borders. They do agree with the idea of having order on the border and having a regulated system where this lady of freedom standing behind me, the Statue of Liberty, says: Come in, but follow the rules.

.(APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Mayor Giuliani, how would you stop that anti-Hispanic sentiment that affects legal residents in American (inaudible)?

GIULIANI: Well, I think the entire group of questions and answers indicates the fact that this is a situation in which none of us have been perfect, all of us have been struggling with this for quite some time. And the reason is we really haven't followed the advice of a great man, Father Hesburgh, who said, We must close the back door of illegal immigration in order to preserve the front door of legal immigration.

And the question is not what mistakes were made in the past by any of us.

The real question is: Who can fix it? How can we fix this?

And the way we fix it by ending illegal immigration, setting up a new rule -- this is not a harsh rule, this isn't a cruel rule, it isn't a difficult one -- if you want to come into the United States, you have to identify yourself. After all, every other country, just about, requires you to identify yourself when you come in.

We'll make it impossible through technology, through a BorderStat system, through all the things we have to do, make it impossible to come in illegally, so people don't hurt themselves as well as hurt us. It's no picnic to be living as an illegal immigrant. It's a terrible way to live.

And even promoting that from the point of view of the illegal immigrant makes no sense.

So we've got end illegal immigration at the border, which is the only place you can end it. And then we have to set up a sensible, secure system of coming in with a tamper-proof ID card...

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mayor.

GIULIANI: ... and allow people to do that.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mayor. (APPLAUSE)

Governor Huckabee, how can we curb that anti-Hispanic sentiment?

HUCKABEE: Well, I was governor of the state that is the second- fastest growing state for Hispanics in the country, and we faced that.

Quite frankly, when we fix the situation and make the border secure and people are here legally, a lot of the sentiment goes away.

And I think we forget sometimes that it's not just that it's the people feeling that the illegals are coming in such great numbers that we can't deal with it. But it's a terrible thing when a person who is here legally, but who may speak with an accent, is racially profiled by members of the public, and people assume that they may be illegal.

It is in everybody's best interest -- it is in most of all the best interest of the legal immigrants -- that we fix this problem, so nobody questions the legitimacy of their being here, which often happens, unfairly, unnecessarily and, frankly, in a completely un- American manner. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Representative Paul?

PAUL: On a negative tone -- well, one thing is, if we want to prevent more negative tone, we won't be working on a tamper-proof ID.

Because how can you have a tamper... (APPLAUSE)

How can you have a tamper-proof ID for illegals or immigrants, without doing it to everybody else?

That's going to lead to a national ID card, which I absolutely oppose. (APPLAUSE)

But we have to realize where the resentment comes from. I believe it's related to our economy. When the economy is weakening and there's resentment because of our welfare system; jobs are going overseas; our good jobs -- pay is going down.

There's a lot of resentments because the welfare system is based on mandates from the federal government to put pressure on states like Florida and Texas to provide services which the local taxpayers resent.

Some of our hospitals are closing. So it's an economic issue, too.

If we deal with the welfare state and a healthy economy and a sound -- money and all this wasteful spending overseas, we would have a healthy economy; I think this problem would be greatly reduced. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Congressman. Thank you.

We're going to have a break and we'll be right back with other important issues in this Republican forum.

MODERATOR: It's the presidential forum, the Republican one. We're going to talk about something else. Now we're going to talk about Latin America. A week ago, exactly a week ago, Venezuela rejected changes to the constitution, but the president, Hugo Chavez... (APPLAUSE)

President Hugo Chavez has insisted that he's going to propose them again. Many consider him a threat to democracy in the region. If you were elected president, how would you deal with Chavez? Let's start with Congressman John Paul -- Ron Paul, sorry.

PAUL: Well, he's not the easiest person to deal with, but we should deal with everybody around the world the same way: with friendship and opportunity to talk and try to trade with people. (AUDIENCE BOOING)

We talked to -- we talked to Stalin, we talked to Khrushchev, we've talked to Mao, and we've talked to the world, and we get along with people.

Actually, I believe we're at a time where we even ought to talk to Cuba and trade and travel to Cuba. (AUDIENCE BOOING) (APPLAUSE)

But let me -- let me tell you -- let me tell you why -- let me tell you why we have a problem in South America and Central America: because we've been involved in their internal affairs for so long. We have been meddling in their business. (APPLAUSE)

We create the Chavezes of the world, we create the Castros of the world by interfering and creating chaos in their countries, and they respond by throwing out their leader. (AUDIENCE BOOING) (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Congressman.

Governor Huckabee, the same thing: How would you deal with President Chavez? He was elected democratically.

Well, Hugo Chavez is hardly the friend of the United States. And even though we get 60 percent of their oil, I think it's one of the major reasons we need to become increasingly oil-free and energy-independent so that we don't have to worry about Mr. Chavez.

APPLAUSE)

HUCKABEE: But there's a greater issue here, and it's the fact that the people of Venezuela aren't Hugo Chavez and Hugo Chavez is not necessarily the spirit of the people of Venezuela. (APPLAUSE)

Even though he was elected, he was not elected to be a dictator as he has become, suspending constitutional law.

My mother used to have a statement: If you give somebody enough rope, they'll hang themselves. I have a feeling that Mr. Chavez, continuing to take power from the people as he has done, will find himself unfortunately out of power, and hopefully for all of us, fortunately a democratically elected government there that will give those people back the freedom that he has robbed from them and hopefully by then we won't need their oil, but they will have their freedom. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Governor.

Mayor Giuliani, the same question.

GIULIANI: I actually agree with the way King Juan Carlos spoke to Chavez. (APPLAUSE)

That would be the way I would do it. (APPLAUSE)

Far better than what Congressman Paul wants to do.

But the reality is that Chavez is acting...(AUDIENCE BOOING) ... Chavez is acting like a dictator. And he should be treated that way. Luckily, he lost the vote recently. It shows the great hope that Governor Huckabee is talking about, that there's a hope that the people of his country understand the need for free markets, understand the need for freedom, real free elections.

There's a counter-movement going on in Latin America. You can see it in Colombia. You can see it in Panama. You can see it in Mexico. I think President Calderon was elected -- not that I'm an expert on Mexican politics -- but I think Chavez had something to do with that.

I think the people in Mexico were sending a signal, that's not the direction they want to go in. They don't want to go in the direction that Castro wanted to take Latin America. They don't want to go toward socialism and communism. They want to go to free markets, they want to go to freedom. I think it's the essential nature of the people of Latin America, and I think Chavez is going in actually the opposite direction, kind of a repeat of what Castro tried to do, and it's a disgrace, and we should stand against it.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mayor. Thank you, Mayor. (APPLAUSE)

When talking about Cuba, Cuban dictatorship has survived nine U.S. presidents. What would you do differently, that has not been done so far, to bring democracy to Cuba? We're going to start with Senator Thompson.

THOMPSON: I'm going to make sure that he didn't survive 10 U.S. presidents. (LAUGHTER)

Castro is unique in many respects. He represents the only non-democratic, at least, elected government in the hemisphere. He is uniquely brutal. He is still tyrannizing his own people.

He lures the vulnerable and the naive Americans down there and puts on shows for them and they come back and do his propaganda. There are not many people who can pull that sort of thing off.

He's obviously in bad health. That situation, probably, is in God's hands. He will probably be succeeded by someone who's no better than him, and that is Raul.

And we should treat Raul with the same contempt that we show Castro, including keeping the embargo on Cuba. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Romney, what would you do differently that has not been done so far?

ROMNEY: Well, first of all, you've got to think about who Castro is, and who Raul Castro is as well.

We call them strongmen -- dictators, authoritative totalitarian leaders. And yet these are individuals who are not strong. Look at what they have done? Brothers to the rescue. They shoot a small aircraft out of the sky. People wearing a wristband that says change, are arrested -- 25 of them just for wearing a

wristband; a Catholic church is edited and people are terrified because a priest is just speaking his sermon.

These people, these Castro brothers are cowards, and we have to recognize they are cowards.
(APPLAUSE)

And for that reason, the course for America is to continue our isolation of Cuba. It is not to say, as Barack Obama on the Democratic side said, that he would dignify the Castros with a personal visit to Cuba. That's not the way to go. Instead, it's to bring our friends together to isolate Cuba, to put together a strategy that helps all of Latin America, weakens Hugo Chavez who is propping up Castro.

ROMNEY: We need a Latin American policy that frees Cuba and that eliminates a threat of people like Hugo Chavez. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you. Governor?

MODERATOR: Senator McCain, the same question. What would you do differently?

McCAIN: First of all, could I again congratulate the people of Venezuela for rejecting this dictator's attempt to become a president for life? And I also would like to echo the words of Prince Juan Carlos, Por que no te callas? Why don't you shut up?

I'm pleased to have the support of Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Mario and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, who advise me and know these issues, and Mel Martinez, every day. My friends, tonight our thoughts and prayers go out to Dr. Bucet (ph), who fights for freedom, who is now in prison, because Dr. Bucet (ph) resisted and fought against a state-controlled and state-mandated abortion.

God bless him and those students who wore this bracelet called Cambio, who are now under arrest today. (APPLAUSE)

Of course we need to keep our embargo up. Of course we cannot allow economic aid to flow to Cuba. And if I were president of the United States, I would order an investigation of the shoot-down of those brave Cubans who were killed under the orders of Raul and Fidel Castro, and, if necessary, indict them.
(APPLAUSE)

Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

The next question, of course, if regarding Iraq.

Congressman Hunter, surveys show that two out of three Hispanics think that the United States should withdraw its troops from Iraq. How would you convince

them of the fact that they should stay there -- the troops should stay there?

HUNTER: Well, you know, there's lots of Hispanic Americans serving in Iraq.

And my son came back from his third tour as a U.S. Marine on Thanksgiving, having served in Iraq twice and Afghanistan. (APPLAUSE)

And, you know, if you check with the Hispanics of the 1st Marine Division or the 10th Army Division of the 1st Cavalry, you'll get a lot different poll than the poll that you're telling me right now, because the young men and women who are serving over there know we can win in Iraq. (APPLAUSE)

And let me tell you what they've done. With blood, sweat and tears they have brought down the attack rate in Anbar province by 80 percent. They brought it down over the entire nation.

The Iraqi army is now standing up, all 131 battalions. That government's going to hold and the army's going to hold, and we are going to leave Iraq in victory, and we're going to leave an Iraq that will be a friend, not an enemy of the United States. (APPLAUSE)

So we're going to be victorious in Iraq, and Hispanic Americans who serve there know that. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Mayor Giuliani, how to convince Hispanics that the troops should stay in Iraq?

GIULIANI: Well, I think Hispanics -- all Americans -- should look at what's the strategic goal that's a victory for America. The strategic goal in Iraq has to be an Iraq that's stable and an Iraq that will act as an ally for us in the Islamic terrorist war against us.

The opposite -- fleeing Iraq, running out of Iraq, giving into the kind of frustrations that the Democrats are portraying, having a declaration of loss in Iraq, will only help the Islamic terrorists and will hurt us. And I think we should give our troops a chance to succeed in Iraq.

How about our goal in Iraq is victory, winning, being successful there, and being successful to the extent of having a stable government and a government that will act as an ally for us?

Every indication that we get from the men and women in the field and from their commanders is that we have a chance to achieve that. It's not guaranteed.

Things and matters of war and peace are never guaranteed. But why not give them a chance to have this kind of success?

After all, it will make us all safer, Republicans, Democrats, Hispanics, non-Hispanics. This is what's good for America. And that's what we should be for. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Senator McCain, why should the troops be kept there?

McCAIN: Because we are succeeding. And years ago, when the Rumsfeld strategy was failing, I was the only one on this stage that said it has to change. (APPLAUSE)

I was the only one on this stage that said we have to pursue a new strategy... (APPLAUSE)

... that Senator Edwards and others used to call the McCain strategy and the McCain surge. They don't do that anymore.

And it was tough in those days, when I said that Rumsfeld had to go, and I had no confidence in him. And I was accused of disloyalty.

Republicans went to Iraq and blamed it on the media. It wasn't the media. We had a failed strategy. Now we have a successful strategy. We can succeed. We will succeed.

And I often like to tell my friends of the time, last Fourth of July, when I saw 128 brave Americans, most of them Hispanic, who had a green card, who raised their hands to become citizens of the United States.

Two weren't there because they'd been killed in combat the week before. I was never (sic) proud of our Hispanic citizens who were willing to lay down their lives to become citizens of this country. They will succeed and I will honor their memory. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Huckabee, why not withdraw the troops from Iraq?

HUCKABEE: Because we are winning, as Senator McCain just said. Civilians deaths are down 76 percent since the surge. Even the military deaths are down over 60 percent. And that's not the only way we know we're winning. We're winning because we see in the spirit of our own soldiers a sense of duty and honor that they are being able to carry out a mission that they were sent there to do. To take them out of it not only means we lose, but it means we totally destroy their sense of morale, and it may take a generation to get it back.

But there's more at stake than just their morale. It's the safety and the security of the Middle East and the rest of the world.

This isn't an issue that's about Hispanics or anybody else in terms of ethnicity. This is about every one of us being able to be free, to have a future, and to be able to know that we're not going to allow a vacuum there, which happens if we lose -- and we lose when we walk away -- to create an opening so that terrorists can build even greater cells of training and empowerment there.

That's why we have to stay. And it's why we have to win. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Romney, for how long would we need to leave our troops in Iraq?

ROMNEY: Let's talk about our mission there. This is not just about strategy and allies. It's not about oil. It's not about just the economy. It's not just about standing up for the fact that we've been there for a long time.

It's about human lives. **ROMNEY:** What we're doing in Iraq relates to protecting the lives of American citizens, here, around the world. It relates to lives throughout the world. It relates to dignity and freedom.

We're in Iraq because we want to make sure that Iraq does not become what Afghanistan was. What Afghanistan was under the Taliban was a place that they could recruit and train and launch attacks against us on 9/11, and other attacks throughout the world.

The Khobar Towers, our embassies in Africa, the USS Cole -- they were launching attacks. The last thing America could stand for, the last thing we could do with the human lives that are so precious, would be to have Iraq become an Afghanistan. Fortunately, the surge is working. It's going to keep that from happening. We're going to have stability and security there and American lives will be saved by virtue of the extraordinary sacrifice of American servicemen. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Governor.

Senator Thompson, for how long?

THOMPSON: The central point needs to be made, and all my colleagues are I think implying it, but I think it needs to be set out in a straightforward manner.

We have yet to fully come to terms with the fact that Iraq and Afghanistan are part of a global conflict, a war by Islamic fascism that's been declared upon us, of which Iraq and Afghanistan are current fronts. They are intent on bringing down Western civilization, and we're the number one target. It's just that simple.

If we leave Iraq with our tail between our legs, we are going to enhance their ability to recruit young people who, they too, can help bring down parts of America and maybe America itself. We will leave an opening for Iran, as it, I still believe, continues to pursue a nuclear capability. And it will provide a sanctuary for terrorists that does not exist anywhere in the world today. All of this would make for a much more dangerous United States of America. That's why we must prevail. And I agree with my colleagues. I believe that we are. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Congressman Paul, you have a different point of view among all of them, don't you?

PAUL: I do. (APPLAUSE)

I definitely have a different point of view, because we weren't justified in going over there. We did not declare the war. And I would say to the Hispanics that believe we ought to come home, I would say: Let's come home as soon as possible. (APPLAUSE)

You might ask the question, why is it that I have a different view point on foreign policy. Because I adhere to the Constitution and the advice of the founders to stay out of the entangling alliances, the internal affairs of other nations.

Why is it then that I get the most money as a candidate for the presidency from active military personnel? They're tired of it too. (APPLAUSE)

We already have a de facto draft. These men who have fought valiantly are called up time and time again. Their services are extended from 12 months to 15 months. They've been over there two and three times, and they don't see an end in sight.

This whole idea, we're going through the same argument, the light at the end of the tunnel. We did this in the '60s when I was in the service. And we finally left Vietnam, tragically. But we do much better in peace with Vietnam. We trade with them. They have become Westernized.

What we achieved in peace we couldn't achieve in war. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Congressman. Thank you.

Well, we want to talk about other topics. And we're going to talk about health.

And we're going to talk with you, Senator McCain. We have a lot of questions. We have hundreds of them. One of them says, I'm not asking for free health insurance, but I'm looking for an affordable health insurance.

That's the question: What would you do to curb the high cost of medical health care and to help those who don't have health insurance?

McCain: Well, first of all, I'm glad you asked that question of the hundreds, because that's the real question.

The real question is: How are we going to keep health care costs down, because we have the highest quality of health care in the world in America today?

And unlike the Democrats, I'm going to preserve that quality of health care, and at the same time stop the inflation and the skyrocketing costs of health care. And there's a couple of principles. One is to make the recipient of the health insurance to be much more responsible in health-care costs and how they allocate and how they choose their insurance policies.

To address wellness and fitness, which is a key element of any way we're really going to reduce health-care costs in America. To give every American family a \$5,000 refundable tax credit so they can go anyplace in the world -- in America to acquire the health insurance policy that best suits their needs. And, if they've got money left over, then invest it in a health savings account.

Ronald Reagan said nobody ever washed a rental car. And that's true in health insurance. If they're responsible for it, then they will take more care of it. And we should have wellness and fitness as...

MODERATOR: Thank you, Senator.

McCAIN: ... emphasized all over America today, particularly amongst young people.

MODERATOR: Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

Mayor Giuliani, how can we curb the high cost and also offer insurance to the people who don't have it?

GIULIANI: The very best way to do it -- and Senator McCain is on the right track, but it has to be more -- more of an incentive for people to buy their own health insurance.

We only have 17 million Americans who buy their own health insurance. If we had 50 million or 60 million Americans who were, the cost of health insurance would probably be cut in half or more than half, and a lot of people could afford it, the way this person is asking us, how can you do it.

So, you give people a \$15,000 for a family tax deduction, tax exemption, to buy their own health insurance. You encourage them to do it. You also give them a health savings account to up to \$5,000 or \$6,000, so that they can then look for deductibles in insurance.

And it brings down the cost of insurance. That's one of the primary ways to do it. And then you break down the barriers where people can only buy in one state and you let them buy in any state, so that we can set up a real competition.

The thing that works in America is not socialized medicine that the Democrats want to bring us, not government control, not mandates, but a large consumer market where you empower people to enter that market is the only way to bring down costs and to bring up quality. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Huckabee, you know the numbers: 47 million people don't have health insurance, including 15 million Hispanic. What can be done to provide coverage for those people?

HUCKABEE: Of those 47 million, one-third don't have it because they are self-insured. Another one-third don't have it because they think they're healthy and invincible. There is one-third that don't have it because they can't afford it. And then there are a lot of people who have insurance, but they're underinsured.

But let me tell you, the biggest problem we have in this country is not a health care crisis, it is a health crisis. We spend \$2 trillion a year on health care, and 80 percent of it goes to chronic disease, which

means that what we really have to begin dealing with is turning the system right side up, because it is upside down focused on waiting until people are catastrophically ill, and then we try to rush in with the most expensive modalities possible.

What we need to be doing is putting the real focus on preventing the illness in the first place. It's the difference between either putting an ambulance at the bottom of the hill or building a fence at the top. We can afford universal coverage, but not until and not even close until we first have health, rather than just focus on health coverage.

Let me say the last thing we need to do is to believe that Michael Moore's idea is good and we can all go to Cuba and get health care. I don't mind shipping him down there, but the rest of us I'd like to get our care here. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Governor Romney, what should we do with all the millions of people who are not insured?

ROMNEY: Well, I think I'm probably the only person on the stage and the only governor that actually stopped talking about getting health care for everybody and actually got the job done.

Working with people across the aisle, we said: Enough is enough. (APPLAUSE)

You know, we're up here talking about all sort of ideas about tax credits and deductions, and my program has a deduction as well. We talk about prevention and people being healthy.

But, look, the best kind of prevention you can have in health care is to have a doctor. And if someone doesn't have a doctor, doesn't have a clinic they can go to, doesn't have health insurance to be able to provide the prescription drugs they need, you can't be healthy. And you need to have health insurance for all of our citizens.

And I found a way to do that without requiring raising taxes, without a government mandate, without a government takeover. Instead, I didn't want to have a -- when I said government mandate, I meant employer mandate. Instead, we have personal responsibility. We allowed individuals to buy their own policies.

Those that couldn't afford them, we helped them buy their policies. And you know what? It cost us no more money to help people buy insurance policies that they could afford than it was costing us before, handing out free care. We Republicans can get everybody insured. Let's get it done. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Senator Thompson, what to do with the 15 million Hispanics who don't have insurance?

THOMPSON: The lower health care costs are, the more people will be insured. There's really two basic ways to lower health care costs: bigger government or more efficient markets.

Government could come in and say what it's going to cost everybody. And then we'd have long lines and waiting, wondering why we can't get radiation for a family member that has cancer and have to wait for months for it, and that sort of thing. We totally, I think, all reject that.

I say, let's make our markets more efficient. We made a mistake in our tax code many years ago. We need to reverse that mistake so people are not so tied to their employment for their insurance. They need, through the tax code, need to have the benefit of buying their own insurance through an open market with more sources, more people offering insurance, lifting regulations to make that happen.

THOMPSON: It would be portable so people could take their insurance with them from job to job.

As we know, people through a lifetime nowadays, have more jobs than they used to. I think that the markets have worked so often for us in so many different ways in this society. Free people competing with each other in free and open markets bring down costs. That's the way to get there. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

We're going to have another break, and we're going to continue with this Republican forum in a minute.

MODERATOR: We'll continue live in Univision with this presidential forum. And we're going to talk about something else. We're going to talk about education.

A recent survey done for La Raza National Council show that nine out of 10 Hispanic voters think that improved public education should be a priority for the next president of the United States.

Let's start with Senator Thompson. What should we do to improve the public schools so our children will be educated in this country from coast to coast?

THOMPSON: First of all, I think we need to recognize where the responsibility lies. It would be easy enough for someone running for president to say: I have a several-point plan to fix our education problem. It's not going to happen. And it shouldn't happen from the Oval Office.

We spend about 9 percent of education dollars now at the federal level. The responsibility historically and properly is at the state and local level.

I think, however, we can do things that would support choice, do things that would support vouchers, do things that would support homeschooling, and recognize that we need to speak the truth.

One of the advantages of being in the Oval Office is having a bully pulpit. And the fact of the matter is, if families would stay together, if fathers would raise their children, especially young men when they get into troublesome ages, we would solve a good part of the education problem in this country. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Senator.

Senator McCain, how can we improve the quality of public schools in this country?

McCAIN: Choice and competition is the key to success in education in America. That means charter schools, that means home schooling, it means vouchers, it means rewarding good teachers and finding bad teachers another line of work. It means... (APPLAUSE)

It means rewarding good performing schools, and it really means in some cases putting bad performing schools out of business.

About three or four weeks ago, I went to a wonderful, wonderful school in the lower-income part of Philadelphia.

It's run by a Hispanic organization called Esperanza. Esperanza has set up a charter school. The kids wear uniforms. It's 98 percent Hispanic and 8 percent African American. Their grades are phenomenal. Their dropout rate is low. Their parents are responsible and they're engaged.

And guess what's happening? The public schools in Philadelphia in the area are starting to improve as well, because of the choice and competition that is employed by the parents there. I want every American

parent to have a choice, a choice as to how they want their child educated, and I guarantee you the competition will dramatically increase the level of education in America. (APPLAUSE)

And I applaud our former Governor Bush for the great job he's done on education in Florida and America.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

Governor Romney, how can we improve education -- public education in this country?

ROMNEY: Well, we've got a pretty good model. If you look at my state, even before I got there, other governors and legislatures worked real hard to improve education. And they did a number of things that made a big difference. One is, they started testing our kids to see who was succeeding, making sure that failing schools were identified and then turning them around. They fought for school choice. When I became governor, I had to protect school choice because the legislature tried to stop it.

And then we also fought for English immersion. We wanted our kids coming to school to learn English from the very beginning. And then we did something that was really extraordinary. We said to every kid that does well on these exams that we put in place before you can graduate from high school, we're going to give you a John and Abigail Adams scholarship, four years tuition-free to our state university or state colleges for all the kids that graduate in the top quarter of their class.

We care about the quality of education. I want to pay better teachers more money. Teachers are underpaid, but I want to evaluate our teachers and see which ones are the best and which ones are not. (APPLAUSE)

And let me tell how our kids are doing. Every two years, we test the kids across the country, the NAEP exam. Our kids -- my kids came out number one in English in fourth and eighth grade, number one in math. In all four tests, our kids came out number one in the nation.

These principles of choice, parental involvement, encouraging high standards, scholarships for our best kids -- these turn our schools into the kind of magnets that they can be for the entire nation.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Governor. (APPLAUSE)

We're going to continue talking about education. One out of three Hispanic students don't finish high school. Governor Huckabee, what would you do to stop dropouts of school.

HUCKABEE: Well, first of all, the reason a lot of kids don't finish school and they drop out -- and by the way, you're right. The Hispanic dropout rate is significantly higher than the general population.

Six thousand kids, every day, drop out of school, 6,000. You know, the only reason any of us are standing on this stage today is because we have an education. Without it, we wouldn't be here.

An education is empowerment. The lack of it leads us to incredible, just all kinds of obstacles in our path.

And we always talk about we need more math and science, and we, and we're doing a better job. But one of the reasons we have kids failing is not because they're dumb, it's they're bored. They're bored with a curriculum that doesn't touch them.

We have schools that are about perpetuating the schools, not helping the students.

I propose launching weapons of mass instruction, making sure that we are launching not only the math and science... (APPLAUSE) ... but music and art programs that touch the right side of the brain, and not only educate the left side of the student's brain. (APPLAUSE)

Because without a creative economy and a creative student, you have a bored student, and that's one of the reasons we see so many of them dropping out. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Mayor Giuliani, dropout among Hispanics, how would you solve that?

GIULIANI: Well, you know, Governor Huckabee reminds me of the fact that I'm the product of a Catholic education from the day I started in kindergarten until the day I got out of college. And it was my parents... (APPLAUSE)

It was my parents' choice. They made that choice for me. I wouldn't have known. They made that choice. It was hard for them to afford it. I was fortunate enough to get scholarships along the way to help.

But the reality is, that's really the answer. And we're all saying it in a different way. We can revolutionize public education in this country by allowing for choice.

Has it ever occurred to you that we have the best higher education system in the world, and we have a weakening K-12, including for Hispanic students?

Now, why do we have the best higher education in the world and this K-12 that's under great stress?

Because higher education is based on choice. It's based on you pick a college because you want to go there. The government doesn't force you to go there.

We should allow parents, like my parents were able to do; we should empower them by giving them the money, giving them scholarships, giving them vouchers, let them choose a public school, a private school, a parochial school, a charter school, homeschooling. Let's give the power to the parents, rather than to the government bureaucrats. And we will turn around education within three years. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Congressman Hunter, you know that problem of dropping out of Hispanics...

HUNTER: You know, in California there was a great teacher named Jaime Escalante, who taught calculus. And he taught calculus in the barrio so effectively that his kids when they took the test were accused of cheating by the school district because they scored so high.

Jaime Escalante brought to the school system the one thing that we need throughout America, and that is inspiration, because young people are deciding what they want to do when they're in third, fourth, fifth, sixth grade.

And what we're going to have to do -- and incidentally, Jaime Escalante ultimately left that school district and the calculus program went down because he had a run-in with the teachers union. What we have to do in this country is to take away all this old credentialing. We've got to bring in aerospace engineers and pilots and mathematicians and scientists and business-people, and we have to bring in people who can inspire kids at a young age to reach for the stars, and then convince them to work hard enough to get there.

Inspiration, that's how we increase our capability in education. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Well, we have the last question for all of you. Hispanics are the biggest minority in the United States, and by 2050, we're going to be 25 percent of the population. Three months ago, I asked the same thing to the Democratic candidates.

What would you think would be the biggest contribution from Hispanics, but we want to ask you what is the role -- what role do you think Hispanics will play in the development of our nation and our society?

We're going to start with Governor Huckabee.

HUCKABEE: On our coins, it says, E pluribus unum. It means out of many, one. Ronald Reagan said it best. He said that if we go to Germany, we're not Germans, and if we go to Italy, we're not Italians. But anyone who comes to America is an American.

One of the great aspects of this nation is that when people come here and unite with us, they share not just our borders and our boundaries. They share our hopes and our dreams and our aspirations. And if there's any one reason that this country is a magnet for people, and clearly a magnet for many Hispanics who have found hope and opportunity here, it's because they see in this country what we ourselves who live here see. And that is that here, we can dream great dreams and actually can see them.

Our equality is not based on our ancestry, our last name, it's not based on how much money we make. It's based on the intrinsic worth and value that every one of us have. It's why we share something else, and I think that this nation is basically pro-life because we recognize that intrinsic worth. And I think what we offer is an opportunity to raise families and to live dreams and to be free.

MODERATOR: Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

Congressman Hunter, what would be -- what role would Hispanics play in the future of our society?

HUNTER: Well, first, I want them to play a role as Republicans. And I want to invite, again, all the young people who are -- registering to vote -- tonight -- to just remember a couple of things. One thing is that that lady in El Salvador who stood there in the line for the elections after a Republican president, Ronald Reagan, had protected El Salvador and provided for free elections, and she had a bullet hole in her arm and she was asked, do you want to go to the aid station, and she said, yes, but first, I vote. So, remember, Republicans stand for freedom.

Secondly, I want you to remember the Republicans stand for life, that the man who founded our party, Abraham Lincoln, did so on the basis of the value of human beings. And lastly, I'd like you to remember that, you know, Democrats think this is a great country because of what government does for people, while Republicans think this is a great country because of what free people do for themselves.

I think Hispanics have a great role with this great nation. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Senator Thompson, you -- how far can Hispanics get in this country?

THOMPSON: I think to help us be as strong as we can be and as good as we can be as Americans, I think the most important thing for Americans to be thinking about tonight is our national security, our future prosperity, for the children coming up behind us and our values.

The Hispanic community is traditionally strong in defending liberty and defending our nation's honor. They have had to fight their way, in many cases, just to come here and become a part of our society.

The Hispanic community is well-known as having a work ethic that is second to none.

They ask for very little and contribute very much. The Hispanic community is known for their values. They know that marriage is between a man and a woman, for example. They know that the family... (APPLAUSE)

They know that the family is at the center of societies, and strong families build better societies. Those are things that they share with all other citizens of the United States...

MODERATOR: Thank you, Senator.

THOMPSON: ... and will make for a stronger country. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Senator McCain, your vision of Hispanics in the future.

McCAIN: My vision of America in the future when Hispanics are a very large percentage of our population is that we will be enriched. We will be enriched by their music, their culture, their food, their language, and most of all, their love of America.

Most of these people came from places where they were deprived of human rights, whether it be a terrible place like Cuba, or a country like Venezuela, where you have a two-bit dictator, depriving them of their opportunities to move forward.

I know what it's like to be deprived of one's human rights, and I know that one of the things that Hispanics will do is love this country and defend it, and defend the great beauty and wonder of this nation, and keep it a shining city on a hill. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Congressman Paul?

PAUL: The most important thing Hispanics can do is what all Americans do: Join us in our effort to restore our Constitution and our great country. We have lost our way. We have lost our way. We have deserted our traditions on our foreign policy, on our economic policy, our education policy, our monetary policy, and this country is looking for help. And people are joining us now to restore this.

And this is not a Hispanic issue, it's an American issue. What we want is the rule of law so we all have opportunity once again. But we have to not only restore the Constitution, we have to first read it and understand it and what it means to be free in this country once again. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Mayor Giuliani?

GIULIANI: Hispanic Americans have already reached great heights in America. They've contributed so much. I saw that in my city. They pushed us to be better. They have the basic values that make us better, values of family, values of hard work, getting a good job, education as the way to success.

Even when you asked that question, What are Hispanics concerned about?, they're concerned about a good education for their child, they're concerned about having an opportunity to work.

These are basic American values. It's what the Cuban-Americans have done, coming to this country. It was wonderful for us that we had Cuban-Americans come here, it made us better, it made us better Americans.

I see that with all the different Hispanic populations in New York that are very, very diverse. This is one country, but it's a country that's informed by all these great traditions.

And when you say Hispanic, we also should recognize this is a diverse tradition. It's from many different countries. They share these common values, but they're coming here to be Americans, and they're making us better by being here in America.

And I think -- I think we do the right things; we have the right approach; we have the right leadership, the sky's the limit for Hispanic Americans. But, you know something, the sky's the limit for all Americans if we have the right kind of leadership. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Governor Romney?

ROMNEY: America needs all Americans. We're in a time of real need. We're the strongest nation on Earth; we're the hope of the Earth. But we face some extraordinary challenges -- global jihadists, violent jihadists, who want to bring down our nations and other nations.

We face, as well, tough new competition coming from places like China and India, unlike anything we've known before. We spend way too much money in Washington, particularly on entitlements that are growing more and more weighty on us.

We have extraordinary challenges culturally as people are deciding to have kids without being married. There are all sorts of challenges in our country. And right now, we need to do what Ronald Reagan did, which is call on America's strength. As he faced the difficulties of the last century, he said, let's have a strong military and a strong economy that can outcompete the Russians. And let's make sure we have strong values and confidence in ourselves.

The Hispanic community, like all other communities in this great nation, need to come together and strengthen America. Because this is the land of the brave and the home of the free. And Hispanics are brave and they are free, as are all of the people of this great nation.

Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Thank you very much to all the candidates for being here with us tonight -- and Univision. Thank you so much for coming. Thanks a lot.