



WEEKLY UPDATE

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Democrats Respond to GOP Hopefuls at CPAC

This week, the 2016 field of potential GOP presidential candidates gathered at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), and we knew exactly what to expect because we've watched this circus before. The Republicans speaking at the conference have yet again make clear that rather than focusing on the economy and expanding opportunity for the middle class, they are fighting for the very rich and special interests.

On a press conference call yesterday, DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz discussed the Republican presidential hopefuls' long-held policy positions that suit only the far right wing of their party. She stated "Republicans—when they're not busy playing chicken with our national security – are looking to go back to the same, old, tired GOP policies that have failed again and again in the past – and are focused on an array of divisive social issues."

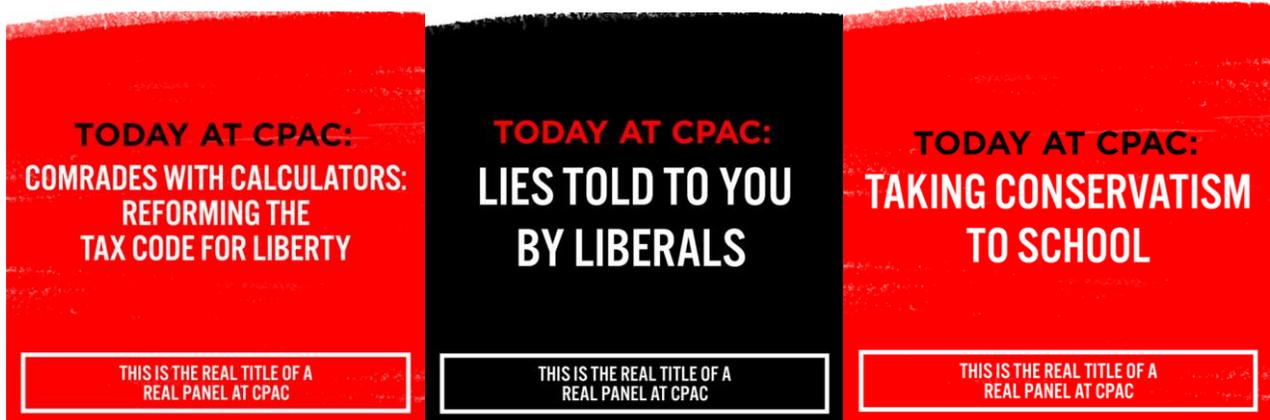
Here are just two examples of what potential GOP presidential candidates have said:

- During a Q&A section at CPAC, [Chris Christie](#) said: "I'm pro-life. I ran as a pro-life candidate in 2009 unapologetically, spoke of the pro-life rally on the steps of the statehouse. The first governor to ever speak at a pro-life rally on the steps of the statehouse in New Jersey, and vetoed Planned Parenthood funding five times out of the New Jersey budget."
- Yesterday at CPAC, [Scott Walker](#) shared his plan for combatting ISIS by comparing Wisconsin workers to terrorists. In response, DNC Communications Director Mo Elleithee released the following statement: "If Scott Walker thinks that it's appropriate to compare working people speaking up for their rights to brutal terrorists, then he is even less qualified to be president than I thought. Maybe he should go back to punting."

It's already been a banner year for the GOP 2016 field, where it's giving [a nod](#) to the fringe on [childhood vaccinations](#), kissing the rings of the [Koch Brothers](#) and extreme immigration voices like [Steve King](#), train-wreck [budget fiascos](#), and even questioning the President's [religion and patriotism](#). On issue after issue, the GOP presidential hopefuls make us weaker both at home and abroad.

Over these last few days, it has been clear what today's Republican Party stands for. While Democrats continue to work hard to increase opportunity for all Americans, today's Republican field supports policies that favor the wealthiest and well connected and leave the middle class behind.

Take a look at some real CPAC panels:



Marco Rubio shows his true colors in New Hampshire

Reinforcing his past history of pandering to the GOP base anytime they criticize him (see: [Reform, Immigration](#)), Marco Rubio is wasting no time in sprinting even further to the right on issue after issue. This week in his first appearance in New Hampshire of 2015, Rubio ticked off positions that seem more comfortable in the Breitbart.com comments section than coming from a fresh face in the GOP who can broaden the party's appeal.

Just take a look at the coverage from Twitter of his town hall in New Hampshire today..

- He [blamed the firestorm](#) over Rudy Giuliani's offensive comments that President Obama doesn't love America on the media – not on Giuliani for saying them.
- He said [he opposes a clean DHS funding bill](#) – a position which could lead to a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security.
- And he suggested that giving undocumented immigrants access to entitlements ["acts as a magnet,"](#) while again running away from the immigration bill he once sponsored.

So don't be fooled by Marco Rubio. He isn't a new and different leader for the Republican Party – he's just repackaging the same out-of-touch Republican ideas we've heard forever.

Perry must be proud today . . . at the expense of Texas' families

This week, Texans woke up to news that they once again have kept their lead as the state with the highest uninsured rate at a [whopping 24.4%](#).

Former Governor Rick Perry must be pretty proud of his success as governor. As you probably remember, [two weeks ago](#) he said that Texans "wanted" a large number of uninsured.

How detached from reality do you have to be to say you were put in office to keep a large number of your citizens uninsured? Perry and his allies have left Texans with a divided state: one for the wealthiest individuals who benefited from his tenure, and one for the very poor, including 24.4% of the population without health insurance, who have to live with his policies.

And this week Perry was in Virginia, talking about these policies that divided Texas with the hope of bringing them to the entire country. Americans cannot risk Perry bringing his bright ideas to the rest of the country.

Under Kasich, a look at Ohio's real State of the State

This week in his State of the State Address, John Kasich will again attempt to tell a story that Ohio is in good economic standing. But in reality, all we've seen during his tenure as Governor is the quite opposite.

Under Kasich's Administration:

- Ohio's private-sector job growth remains sluggish at 1.14 percent — which is about half of the national average at 2.19 percent;
- Overall job growth puts Ohio at 37th among states;
- Median household income is far behind other states with Ohio ranking just 38 out of 50; and
- An unacceptable 1.8 million Ohioans live in poverty, or about 16 percent of the state's total population.

So while no one expects to hear John Kasich try to explain why his state is lagging behind in so many economic indicators, we do expect him to double down on the same trickle down economic policies that have only benefited the wealthy and well connected. The Kasich experiment is not working in Ohio and it's certainly not working for its middle class families.

The 'traveling circus' the RNC can't stop MSNBC // STEVE BENEN

Nearly two years ago, with his party still licking its wounds after a rough 2012 cycle, RNC Chairman Reince Priebus looked ahead to the 2016 presidential race and focused on a specific goal: [far fewer debates](#).

RNC Chairman Reince Priebus said Friday he was trying to stop the party's primary process from transforming into a "traveling circus."

"Quite frankly, I'm someone – I don't think having our candidates running around in a traveling circus and doing 23 debates, slicing and dicing each other is in the best interests of our party," Priebus said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe."

There's little doubt that Priebus' concerns were rooted in fact. The 2012 debates for the Republican presidential candidates were often entertaining, but they didn't do any favors for the aspirants themselves. When the Republican National Committee [sharply curtailed](#) the total number of debates for the 2016 race – and prioritized events on Fox – it didn't come as a surprise.

But as the Republicans' presidential field takes shape, it's becoming increasingly clear that the "traveling circus" is not wholly dependent on debates – a circus needs clowns, stunts, and acrobatics, and the likely 2016 candidates are already providing plenty of antics for our viewing pleasure.

* The entire party is facing a curious new litmus test about whether President Obama is a patriot and a Christian. It's a test Wisconsin Gov. [Scott Walker](#) (R) is failing badly.

* This comes on the heels of a vaccinations litmus test that Sen. [Rand Paul](#) (R-Ky.) failed – one of many key issues the senator [doesn't seem to understand](#).

* Former Florida Gov. [Jeb Bush](#) (R) is desperate to prove he's his "own man" by hiring his brother's and his father's team of advisers, and advancing his ambitions with his brother's and his father's team of donors.

* New Jersey Gov. [Chris Christie's](#) (R) operation appears to be moving backwards – his [vaccinations flub](#) didn't help – as his popularity falls quickly in his home state.

* Right-wing neurosurgeon [Ben Carson](#) (R) has positioned himself as a rare candidate who supports war crimes.

* The closer Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) gets to launching his campaign, the more some party officials plead with him not to run.

* Former Arkansas Gov. [Mike Huckabee](#) (R) wants states to pursue nullification if the Supreme Court endorses marriage equality.

* Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) seems eager to [say](#) and/or [do](#) anything to get attention.

* A variety of GOP candidates have set up private meetings [with Donald Trump](#).

The Greatest Show on Earth? Probably not, though it's clear the "traveling circus" is well underway, and there's very little Reince Priebus can do about it.

The problem isn't the debates, per se. Rather, it's the candidates themselves who run the risk of embarrassing themselves and their party. As the last few weeks have reminded us, they don't need a debate platform to cause trouble.

In the States

- Following Senator Marco Rubio's visit to New Hampshire on Monday, New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Ray Buckley released the following statement: "Marco Rubio is in New Hampshire to convince Granite Staters that he's a fresh face for the GOP, but the reality is he's just a new package for the same failed Republican ideas of the past 30 years. Rubio isn't a principled leader pushing new ideas; he's simply a self-interested, opportunistic politician. Perhaps that's why one of his first meetings in New Hampshire is with Scott Brown... Rubio's backward agenda is no different than the rest of the Republican field and would be devastating for New Hampshire's small businesses, middle class families and economy." Read the full press release [here](#).
- On Monday, the Florida Democratic Party called out Senator Marco Rubio for changing his stance on significant issues in order to pander to potential supporters during a New Hampshire visit. The Party highlighted how earlier this month, Senator Rubio noted the importance of making sure the Department of Homeland Security does not face a shutdown, yet just this week, during a visit to the early Presidential primary state, Rubio said, "I don't believe we should pass a clean DHS bill." The Florida Democratic Party released the following statement: "Just like he did so disastrously on his immigration bill, this is nothing more than a politics-as-usual flip-flop to appease right-wing primary voters. It didn't work then and it won't work now. Rubio is playing political games with our national security, and recklessly risking another shutdown over immigration." Read the full press release [here](#).
- On Wednesday, the Louisiana Democratic Party highlighted sharp criticisms of Governor Bobby Jindal from state legislators who said he is embarrassing himself and the state by expressing support for Rudy Guilliani's disrespectful comments. The state legislators noted that Governor Jindal's gaffe-prone attempts to make a national name for himself are reflective of his ignorance to fixing Louisiana's problems at home, such as the \$1.6 billion budget crisis. One of the state legislators that spoke out, Representative Regina Barrow, released the following statement: "Governor Jindal must join with legislators to put an end to this crisis. We need to expand Medicaid, protect higher education opportunities, pass equal pay for our working families. I don't know what's worse, the governor's rejection or his absence from the discussion entirely. The governor should worry less about the job he wants and focus on the job he has." Read the full press release [here](#).
- On Thursday, Texas Democratic Party Executive Director Kay Perkins released the following statement in response to Senator Ted Cruz's CPAC speech: "Instead of offering real solutions to tackle issues affecting Americans, Senator Cruz chose to make bad jokes and offensive imitations. Cruz proved once again that he's more concerned with headlines than helping hardworking Texans." Read the full press release [here](#).
- On Thursday, in a visit to Virginia, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie spent more time outside of his home state as a part of his ongoing effort to garner support for a 2016 Presidential run. The Virginia Democratic Party criticized Governor Christie's economic failures in New Jersey, and warned Virginians to steer clear of Christie's harmful policies. Democratic Party of Virginia spokeswoman Morgan Finkelstein released the following statement: "If Virginia Republicans want to seriously compete in 2016, they should stay far away from Chris Christie's horrible economic ideas. Christie's record reads like a step-by-step guide of how not to run a state." Read the full press release [here](#).