

# The Washington Post

## 10 Questions for tonight's Bloomberg/Washington Post GOP debate

By Allen McDuffee  
October 11, 2011

Republican candidates will square off once again tonight for the Bloomberg/Washington Post Republican Presidential Debate at 8 p.m. in Hanover, N.H.

The focus of tonight's debate is the economy--including jobs, taxes, the deficit and the creation of economic growth.

As hard as they try, moderators can't get every question in. Here are 10 questions on the minds of think tankers.

•**Mike Franc**, Heritage Foundation: One of the most important differences between the economic philosophies of the president and the GOP field lies in how much, or little, confidence they have in the ability of government officials to make decisions to steer our economy in one direction or another. Given the excesses we saw in the private sector that led to the economic meltdown in 2008, what makes you think that private sector players are any better at this than their counterparts in government?

•**Sam Sherraden**, New America Foundation: There are fewer private sector jobs today than there were at the end of the 1990s and the economy is not expected to return to full-employment until the later part of this decade. Given this condition, what would you do to create jobs?

•**Elisabeth Jacobs**, Brookings Institution: Should we eliminate the unemployment insurance system as it currently stands? If so, what should replace it, and why?

•**John C. Goodman**, National Center for Policy Analysis: Each of you has promised to repeal Obama Care. What would you do to control health care costs and increase access to care for 50 million people?

•**Andrew Exum**, Center for a New American Security: Gov. Romney recently stated in a speech at the Citadel and in a white paper that he would use the first 100 days of a Romney presidency to invest in the U.S. Navy -- presumably to meet the 21st Century security challenges in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. But after a decade of combat, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps are exhausted. In a constrained budget environment, what is your plan to re-invest in the needs of our nation's ground forces while at the same time investing in those forces -- our Air Force and Navy -- that guard the global commons. And can we afford to shrink the overall size of our ground forces after the transition in Afghanistan and meet security challenges with a smaller force?

•**Dean Baker**, Center for Economic and Policy Research: Conservative economist Kevin Hassett has complained about the overly rigid unemployment insurance system. Under the current unemployment system the government will pay workers roughly half their wage if an employer lays them off so that they are completely unemployed. However, if an employer wants to cut back five workers' hours by 20 percent each, the government won't pay any benefits to these partially unemployed workers.

Would you favor giving employers the flexibility to reduce workers' hours as an alternative to layoffs and allowing the workers to collect partial benefits? Would you change your answer if you knew that President Obama supports this proposal?

•**Michael A. Needham**, Heritage Action for America: A third of small business owners say Obamacare is one of the biggest hurdles they face to hiring new workers and budget analysts estimate it is a trillion-dollar budget buster. Given its negative impact on the economy and federal budget, do you think it is appropriate to repeal Obamacare using reconciliation given that is the tactic which was employed to pass it?

•**Jim Kessler**, Third Way: It's September 2008 and Lehman Brothers has just gone under, the financial markets are in a free-fall, and the banking system has seized up grinding the wheels of commerce to a halt. Nearly everyone on this stage has stated at one time or another their vigorous opposition to the steps that former President Bush and incoming President Obama took in an effort to stave off the financial crisis – opposition to the emergency loan program to keep banks afloat, opposition to the rescue of the automobile industry, opposition to the stimulus package. What would you have done faced with a similar crisis?

•**Kevin Hassett**, American Enterprise Institute: Herman Cain's 9-9-9 plan is very similar to a flat tax. What is wrong with Cain's plan?

•**Mark A. Calabria**, Cato Institute: What is your basic view of Keynesian stimulus? Do you believe more government spending would be a positive for the economy? Do you believe deficits can have a negative impact on spending?