



Left to right: Tom Coburn, Nikki Haley, Allen West and Paul Ryan at a town hall moderated by CBS News' Erica Hill and Bob Schieffer at the Newseum in Washington, June 13, 2011.

Four of the biggest names in the Republican Party - Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, Rep. Allen West of Florida, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and Sen. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma - sat down with CBS News on Monday for an hour-long, town-hall style discussion at the Newseum in Washington.

[Read a transcript of the full CBS News Town Hall on "The Early Show"](#)
[Town hall after show: What did the audience think?](#)

The event, which was taped Monday afternoon and broadcast on CBS News' "The Early Show" Tuesday morning, was hosted by Face the Nation Anchor Bob Schieffer and "The Early Show" Co-Anchor Erica Hill, and it follows a similar event featuring President Obama last month. Like

that discussion, the conversation quickly turned to the struggling economy, which voters have identified as their top concern.

"If you were in the position to do so," an audience member asked to kick off the event, "what would be the one thing you would do to stimulate and grow the economy that President Obama isn't doing?"

After jokingly asking "One thing?," Ryan - the chairman of the House Budget Committee and the author of the Republican budget plan - said he'd "go in the opposite direction on spending, on taxes, on debt and deficits."

"Get rid of all the uncertainty in the economy," Ryan continued. "He's promising huge tax increases on successful small businesses. I wouldn't do that. Keep taxes low and get spending under control so we don't have a debt crisis. If we have a debt crisis and we have a huge interest rate increase. We have an inflation problem. That's causing uncertainty in the economy. It's making it harder for businesses to create jobs. So, I would go in a different direction than he has gone on fiscal policy. And that's exactly what we've done in the house. Is offered a different direction on fiscal policy. Keep taxes and spending low, not high."

[Full Coverage: CBS News Town Hall](#)

The three other Republicans sounded similar notes. West pointed to what he described as burdensome regulations and tax policies that "are gonna preclude [companies] from hiring more Americans," while Haley said "what I would like to see this president do is really lead and asked for a balanced budget, which he has yet to do." Haley went on to say that "everything I've tried to do to govern in South Carolina has been stopped by President Obama," pointing to the federal health care law, immigration policy and a National Labor Relations Board dispute involving Boeing.

Coburn, meanwhile, said "the real problem is America's anxious."

"It doesn't have confidence about where we're going," he said. "And that's, I think, a leadership

deficit on behalf of my friend, President Obama. I think we need to talk...honestly to the American public about the depth of our problems. They're not unsolvable, but they're unsolvable until we address them and identify 'em."

"There's \$2.5 trillion sittin' on the sideline in this country right now that could be invested if people had confidence and clarity about the future," he continued. "And I don't believe President Obama has delivered that. And I think as soon as he does, you're gonna see a big turnaround in the economy. Regardless of what we do on the other things."

Later, CBS News Business and Economics Correspondent Rebecca Jarvis told Ryan that while polls show that Americans are primarily concerned with jobs and the economy, "We hear more about the deficit than we hear about jobs."

Ryan responded that "they're interrelated."

"These are the same issue," he said. "So, they're not exclusive of one another. Jobs comes from economic growth. Economic growth gives us more revenues, which helps us get down the deficit."

Jarvis went on to point to "very weak" consumer demand, to which Ryan responded, "Consumption comes when people feel secure in their own lives."

"You need to have a good economy that is producing jobs and giving security, economic security to Americans, who then will go forward," he said.

Schieffer later addressed the three members of Congress in the group, noting that they have "done absolutely nothing" in terms of passing a jobs program in the current Congress. When Ryan responded "we have divided government now," Schieffer noted, "Well, there's always been divided government."

After Ryan offered a response, Schieffer said in reference to the Ryan budget, "but you passed something that you knew there wasn't one chance that the Senate was gonna [pass]."

"Well, it would be nice if the Senate tried to pass a budget," responded Ryan. "It's been 775 days since the Senate even bothered trying to pass a budget."

That prompted this from Schieffer: "But wouldn't it be good to try to find some way to compromise on these things to kind of get the people at the same table and say, 'Here's something we want to do. Here's something you want to do. Instead of passing these things that people know will never get agreed to by the other house.'"

The point prompted Coburn to complain of "a system of the careerism that has invaded and perhaps been here a long time."

"The goal is the next election, not the next generation right now in Washington," he added. "We're more interested in political careers than we are fixing the very real and urgent problems in front of our country."

Sen. Tom Coburn says U.S. "in trouble," open to talks with Democrats on taxes

Given an opportunity to explain his controversial plan to transform Medicare, Ryan later pointed to the fact that his changes would not go into effect for people under 55.

"It's an idea that's had bipartisan support in the past," he said. "It's called premium support. It works just like Medicare Advantage today. Medicare prescription drugs. Medicare supplemental. You get a list of plans that Medicare preapproves that are guaranteed coverage options that you select from. These plans compete against each other for your business. And then Medicare subsidizes that plan based on who you are. If you're a wealthy person, we don't think tax payers should subsidize their health care as much as everybody else. If you're a lower income person or if you're a person who keeps getting sicker, we think we should have increased subsidies."

Later, Jarvis and West discussed a viewer question asking "Considering the fact that the U.S. Government is the nation's largest employer, how do you expect to cut \$2 trillion from the budget without sending the jobless rate through the roof?"

West responded that America has to "get back to understanding what are the essential functions of the federal government."

"So, I think that, you know, we can have this bureaucratic nanny state. That grows up here in Washington, D.C.," he said. "And if you continue to have that, you're gonna continue to have the separation between the revenues that are coming in and the spending that is going out."

Coburn, meanwhile, suggested lawmakers "ought to be thrown in jail" for not passing a budget.

"It's the federal law that the budget be completed by April 15th of every year," he said. "It's a law."

"I mean, think about it," he added. "We ignored what the law says and not done it."

Quipped Hill: "Don't give anybody any ideas."

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