



AP Photo/David Goldman
Republican presidential candidate, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, waves to the crowd as he steps to the podium to speak at the RedState Gathering, Friday in Atlanta.



AP Photo/David Goldman
Republican presidential candidate, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, speaks at the RedState Gathering, Friday in Atlanta.

GOP: Debate was the most-watched program in Fox news history

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is an unsettled affair that’s just getting started.

“Party donors, party leaders need to take a deep breath, put down the sharp objects, step away from the window,” Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal said at the RedState Gathering of conservative activists in Atlanta. “The voters will decide who our nominee is. They’ll decide who the president is.”

And the voters seem to be loving the show.

Thursday night’s debate wasn’t just the most-watched program in the history of Fox News Channel, it drew more than twice as many views as the previous record-setter — the 2012 election night.

Undoubtedly, the reason for the record ratings was Trump. On CNN late Friday, he crowed about it: “If I wasn’t in the event, they probably would’ve done 2 or 3 million people max.”

Earlier Friday, he told the morning TV talk shows he couldn’t recall insulting women in the past — rejecting the premise of a debate question posed by Fox News’ Megyn Kelly.

“You know, some of the statements she made about the women, I don’t recognize those words whatsoever,” Trump said on ABC’s “Good Morning America.” “We’re going to take a very serious look at it.”

He won’t have to look far. Trump’s Twitter feed is sprinkled with insults to women — and some men — that use words such as “dog,” “ugly,” “dumb,” “stupid” and “disgusting.”

In the early hours of Friday morning, he also republished a tweet that referred to Kelly as a “bimbo” — and later Friday he called her a “lightweight.”

That dust-up, and Trump’s refusal to say he would support the eventual GOP nominee if he’s not the party’s choice, earned him the top headlines from the debate, overshadowing some of the GOP’s biggest stars and creating space for some new faces to shine.

But for all the attention on Trump, Bush said Friday the criticism lobbed at him by Democrats shows he is the candidate they fear most.

“I’ll take that as a badge of honor,” he said.

While Bush was thinking about the general election, many of the contenders headed south for RedState to work on shoring up their support among the party base.

Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry noted that he’d been relegated to the pre-debate debate for the seven candidates who failed to qualify for the main event. “I was up late last night,” Perry said. “Not as late as I wanted to be.”

But Perry campaigned as

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— N.J. Gov. Chris Christie

if one of the party’s top-tier candidates, declaring that his 14 years as governor in Texas prove he’s worthy of a promotion.

“It’s important for our country to have this discussion about executive experience,” Perry said, knocking President Barack Obama as “an inexperienced senator” who has “driven this country into a ditch.”

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio also spoke Friday at RedState. Bush will be there Saturday, along with Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker.

Rubio was at ease with the crowd recalling his first visit to the RedState Gathering in 2010, when he was a longshot U.S. Senate candidate in Florida.

“I was an underdog against (former Florida Gov.) Charlie Crist and I was trailing by 40 points in the polls,” he said. “Now I’m here running for president.”

Speaking before Rubio was another underdog, Carly Fiorina, who got rave reviews from conservatives with her standout debate performance. The RedState audience was equally impressed.

Fiorina, who has never held public office, hopes that her welcome here marks a new routine for her campaign as she tries to vault into the top tier of GOP presidential hopefuls.

“Well, I don’t know, I think we kind of rumbled last night, what do you think?” Fiorina said. “I had a lot of fun last night.”

Christie told the RedState crowd that his leadership of a Democratic-leaning state makes him “battle tested for Washington.”

During his Q&A, Christie fielded questions about how Southern conservatives can connect with his boisterous Jersey personality. Christie said Americans from all regions care about a sound economy, national security and individual liberty.

Then he added: “Think about listening to this accent for eight years. ... You’ll just have to deal with the New Jersey thing. It will be fine. Don’t worry about it.”

James Holmes will spend life behind bars

CENTENNIAL, Colo. (AP) — Twelve jurors failed to agree on a death sentence for Colorado theater shooter James Holmes on Friday, prompting shocked sobs from victims, police officers and his own mother. The former neuroscience graduate student will instead spend the rest of his life in prison for mass murder.

The nine women and three men said they could not reach a unanimous verdict on each murder count. That automatically eliminates the death penalty for Holmes, who blamed his killings of 12 people on mental illness.

The verdict came as a surprise. The same jury earlier rejected Holmes’ insanity defense, finding him capable of understanding right from wrong when he carried out the 2012 assault that injured 70. Jurors also previously moved closer to the death penalty when they quickly determined the heinousness of Holmes’ crimes outweighed his mental illness.

As the sentence was read, Holmes’ mother, Arlene, who had asked the jury to spare her son’s life, leaned her head against her husband’s shoulder and began sobbing.

Tears broke out across the courtroom. In the back, Aurora police officers who



AP Photo/Brennan Linsley
Dave Hoover, center left, whose nephew A.J. Boik was killed in the 2012 Aurora movie theatre attack, embraces Caren Teves, whose son Alex was also killed, as Teves’ husband Tom, left holds an umbrella, after a jury failed to agree on whether theater shooter James Holmes should get the death penalty Friday in Centennial, Colo.

responded to the bloody scene of Holmes’ attacks began crying.

Sandy Phillips, whose daughter Jessica Ghawi was killed by Holmes, shook her head no and then held it in her hands. Ashley Moser, whose 6-year-old daughter died in the attack and who was herself paralyzed by Holmes’ bullets, also shook her head and then slowly leaned it against the wheelchair of another paralyzed victim, Caleb Medley.

Families of victims began to leave the courtroom

as Judge Carlos Samour Jr. continued reading the verdict. Their wails were audible through the closed courtroom doors.

As in previous proceedings, Holmes, who is on anti-psychotic medication that dulls his responses, showed no reaction. His attorneys left court without commenting.

One juror told reporters outside court that there was a single juror who refused to give Holmes the death penalty and two others who were wavering. The key

Obama suffers setback as Schumer rejects Iran deal

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama suffered a notable setback in his all-out campaign to secure Democratic support for the Iran nuclear deal when the leading Jewish Democrat in the Senate announced his opposition. The question is how significant the blow will turn out to be.

Republicans, infuriated by Obama’s recent comparison of GOP foes of the pact to “Death to America” Iranian hardliners, immediately focused on the stunning break with the president by Chuck Schumer of New York, and they’re urging other Democrats to buck the administration.

But there was no quick

indication that the announcement by Schumer, the No. 3 Senate Democrat and party leader-in-waiting, would trigger a rush of Democratic opposition to the international accord, which aims to curb Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for billions of dollars in relief from crippling economic sanctions.

In fact, just hours after Schumer’s late Thursday statement, Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Vermont Independent Bernie Sanders endorsed the deal, bringing the number of Senate backers to 15.

“The test of a great nation is not how many wars it can engage in, but how it can resolve international conflicts

in a peaceful manner,” said Sanders, a Democratic presidential candidate who said he spoke to Obama on Friday.

Still, a second New Yorker, Rep. Eliot Engel, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and an additional Democratic member of the panel, Brad Sherman of California, joined Schumer Friday in opposing the deal.

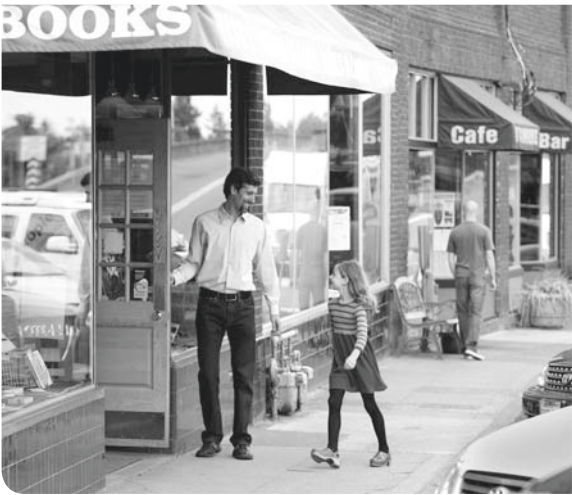
Five weeks before crucial votes in Congress, Schumer’s decision was seen as a blow to the administration, whose intense lobbying on Capitol Hill since last month’s deal had produced a steady stream of support from Democrats who had been the most vocal in demanding congressional

oversight, including Virginia’s Tim Kaine and Florida’s Bill Nelson.

But Democrats in the House and Senate said they remained confident that a sufficient number would ensure Obama’s deal survives.

“I think there is every reason to be optimistic that we will be able to sustain a veto in the House,” said Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., one of the party’s vote counters.

House and Senate Republicans have enough votes to pass a resolution of disapproval next month, but Obama is widely expected to veto that resolution and Republicans will then try to overturn the veto.



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