



AP Photo/David J. Phillip
 Republican presidential candidate, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., left, reacts as Republican presidential candidate, businessman Donald Trump speaks during a Republican presidential primary debate at The University of Houston on Thursday in Houston.

Anxious to slow Trump, Rubio and Cruz attack

HOUSTON (AP) — Brawling from the get-go, a fiery Marco Rubio went hard after Donald Trump in Thursday night's Republican debate, lacerating the front-runner's position on immigration, his privileged background, his speaking style and more.

Ted Cruz piled on, too, questioning the front-runner's conservative credentials, as the two senators tag-teamed Trump in a debate that reflected the increasing urgency of their effort to take down the billionaire businessman before he becomes unstoppable. It was a rare night where the bombastic Trump found himself on the defensive.

The debate played out as a raucous night of tit-for-tat insults, with candidates shouting over one another so much that it was hard to follow at times. The showdown came just days before the Super Tuesday 11-state round of mega-voting that could all but lock up the nomination.

When Trump faulted Rubio on a deal to buy a \$179,000 house, the Florida senator shot back that if Trump "hadn't inherited \$200 million, you know where Donald Trump would be right now? Selling watches in Manhattan."

In another rough exchange, Rubio accused Trump of shifting his position on deportation, hiring people from other countries to take jobs from Americans and being

"This guy's a choke artist and this guy is a liar."

— Donald Trump, Attacking Rubio and Cruz

finned for worker violations. Joining in, Cruz criticized Trump for suggesting he alone had "discovered the issue of illegal immigration."

Trump shot back at Rubio: "I hired tens of thousands of people. You've hired nobody."

As for Cruz, Trump took a more personal tack, touting his own ability to get along with others and adding: "You get along with nobody. ... You should be ashamed of yourself."

Both Rubio and Cruz said that Trump had had to pay a \$1 million fine for illegal immigration hiring.

The candidates were pressed on why they haven't released their tax returns as promised. The GOP's 2012 nominee, Mitt Romney, suggested this week that Trump was holding back because there was a "bombshell" that would be revealed.

Thursday night, Trump offered a new excuse, saying that he's been audited by the IRS every year and can't release his returns while that's going on.

Rubio and Cruz both promised to release more of theirs in the next two days.

Rubio was the principal aggressor of the night, and he held nothing back. Taking on Trump's declaration that he'd build a wall on the Mexican

border, Rubio declared: "If he builds a wall the way he built Trump Tower he'll be using illegal immigration to do it." Trump, for his part, insisted that even though officials in Mexico have said they won't pay for his planned wall, "Mexico will pay for the wall." And he said that because Mexico's current and former presidents had criticized him on the issue, "the wall just got 10 feet taller."

Trump, known for his frequent use of coarse and profane language on the campaign trail, scolded former Mexican President Vicente Fox for using a profanity in talking about Trump's plan for the wall.

"He should be ashamed of himself and he should apologize," declared Trump.

After Trump mocked Rubio for his "meltdown" in a previous debate when the Florida senator repeated rote talking points, Rubio swatted right back, scolding Trump for spouting the same things over and over Thursday night: "Everyone's dumb. He's going to make America great again. We're going to win, win, win. He's winning in the polls."

When Trump repeated his positions on health care, Rubio pounced again. "Now he's repeating

himself," Rubio said with a grin.

Trump was hardly silent, responding to both Rubio and Cruz: "This guys a choke artist and this guy's a liar. ... Other than that I rest my case."

While Rubio was loaded for bear from the start, Cruz ramped up his criticism as the night word on. The Texas senator said Trump wasn't releasing his tax returns "because he's afraid," and he argued that Trump wouldn't be an effective opponent against Hillary Clinton in the general election.

Making light of Cruz's attempts to diminish him, Trump said: "Keep fighting, keep swinging, man, swing for the fences."

In the past, Rubio and Cruz had shown little willingness to take on the former reality television star when the national spotlight was the brightest. That all changed in the ninth GOP debate of the campaign, clearly showing the growing sense that Trump is on track for the nomination.

The debate's location in Houston gave a nod to the primacy of Texas in the Super Tuesday voting: There are 595 delegates at stake, 155 in Texas.

The other two remaining candidates, Ben Carson and John Kasich, were largely left to watch the fireworks flying overhead.

At one point, as the top three candidates mixed it up, Carson spoke up: "Can somebody attack me please?"

BRIEFLY

Utah bills would allow law enforcement to shoot down drones

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah lawmakers' proposed solution to getting recreational drones out of the way of emergency response units? Shoot them out of the sky.

Legislators throughout the U.S. are working to figure out the best way to regulate drones as they become increasingly prevalent, particularly when it comes to interfering with emergency response work. Other states have proposed shooting down drones, but it hasn't become law, according to the National Center for State Legislatures.

Law enforcement already has some tools to control airspace.

In cases such as wildfires, law enforcement can ask the Federal Aviation Administration to restrict air travel. That could apply to planes and unmanned aircraft, more popularly known as drones.

Drones keep coming, though. The flying devices interfered with aircraft fighting during more than a dozen wildfires last year, according to the U.S. Forest Service. In 2014, they interfered during just a handful of fires.

Two Utah lawmakers proposing similar bills aim to change that.

State Sen. Wayne Harper, a Republican from Taylorsville, proposed a bill that would allow law enforcement to "neutralize" drones, which could include shooting them, jamming their signals or convincing their operators to move them.

Nevada governor withdraws name from high court consideration

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval said Thursday he is not interested in being considered for the Supreme Court vacancy — a decision that foils one route President Barack Obama might have had to breach Senate Republicans' planned blockade of any election-year confirmation.

Sandoval, a Republican and the state's first Hispanic governor, issued a statement the day after news broke that the White House was considering him as a potential replacement for the late Justice Antonin Scalia.

"Earlier today, I notified the White House that I do not wish to be considered at this time for possible nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States," wrote Sandoval, an abortion rights supporter and former federal judge. "The notion of being considered for a seat on the highest court in the land is beyond humbling, and I am incredibly

grateful to have been mentioned."

He offered no reason for his decision but said he also expressed his position to senators Harry Reid, Dean Heller and Mitch McConnell.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest declined to comment, saying he would not offer detailed updates on the president's short list.

The Senate's vetting process for any nominee is expected to be viciously political, if hearings take place at all.

Recommending a popular, moderate Republican would test the unified GOP caucus's insistence that voters in November and the next president should make the lifetime appointment.

Cleveland surgeons perform nation's first uterus transplant

CLEVELAND (AP) — Surgeons in Cleveland say they have performed the nation's first uterus transplant, a new frontier that aims to give women who lack wombs a chance at pregnancy.

In a statement Thursday, the Cleveland Clinic said the nine-hour surgery was performed a day earlier on a 26-year-old woman, using a uterus from a deceased donor.

The hospital had long been planning for such a surgery, announcing last fall a clinical trial that would attempt 10 transplants. The hospital said it wouldn't release any more details until a press conference next week.

Other countries have tried womb transplants — Sweden reported the first successful birth in 2014, with a total of five healthy babies so far. Doctors there say the still experimental treatment might be an alternative for some of the thousands of women unable to have children because they were born without a uterus or lost it to disease.

Others have questioned whether such an extreme step would be a realistic option for many women. It's fraught with medical risk, including rejection of the transplant and having to take potent immune-suppressing drugs for a transplant that, unlike patients who receive a donated kidney or heart, isn't life-saving.



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Gunman, 3 others dead after Kansas shootings

HESSTON, Kan. (AP) — A sheriff in south-central Kansas said Thursday that four people, including a gunman, are dead after a series of shootings at a business, its parking lot and two streets nearby.

Harvey County Sheriff T. Walton said at a news conference that all the dead were shot inside Excel Industries, a plant in Hesston that makes lawn mower products. He said 14 were injured in the shootings.

Law enforcement officers killed the gunman, who worked at the plant, after he began shooting at them, Walton said.

Before driving to the plant, the man fired from his vehicle, the sheriff said.

The shooting comes less than a week after authorities say a man opened fire at several locations in Kalamazoo, Michigan, leaving six people dead and two severely wounded.

Martin Espinoza, who



Fernando Salazar/The Wichita Eagle via AP
 Police look for a possible second shooter at Excel Industries in Hesston, Kan., Thursday.

works at Excel, was in the plant during the shooting. He heard people yelling to others to get out of the building, then heard popping, then saw the shooter, a co-worker he described as typically pretty calm.

Espinoza told The Associated Press the shooter pointed a gun at him and

pulled the trigger, but the gun was empty. At that point, the shooter got a different gun and Martin took off running. "I looked right at him

and he looked right at me," Espinoza said.

KSN-TV footage showed a large law enforcement presence at Excel Industries and at least one person being loaded into an ambulance. A college nearby was briefly locked down.

Hesston is a community of about 3,700 residents about 35 miles north of Wichita. Excel Industries was awarded the Governor's Exporter of the Year award in 2013 from the Kansas Department of Commerce. The company manufactures Hustler and Big Dog mowing equipment and was founded in Hesston in 1960.

Walton said the FBI and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation had been called in to assist.



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