



SIMI VALLEY: Republican presidential candidate, businesswoman Carly Fiorina, (right) leads fellow candidates Scott Walker, (second from right) Jeb Bush, (center) and Donald Trump as they take the stage prior to the CNN Republican presidential debate at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. — AP photos

TRUMP UNDERWHELMS AS FIORINA SHINES IN DEBATE

THREE-HOUR MARATHON DELVED DEEP INTO ISSUES

SIMI VALLEY: Republican voters fed up with Washington and anyone with a background in politics have cheered billionaire businessman Donald Trump as the ultimate 2016 outsider, making him the front-runner for the GOP nomination. But Trump's lack of experience with public policy was exposed throughout the second GOP presidential debate on Wednesday, a three-hour marathon that delved deep into complicated issues at home and abroad.

Unconventional approaches

It may be some time before anyone knows if that will have any effect on Trump's place in the field - his supporters have so far embraced his decidedly unconventional approach to presidential politics. Another outsider, former technology executive Carly Fiorina, may have helped herself the most Wednesday night. Seizing her debut moment on the main debate stage, she attacked Trump as "an entertainer," offered a passionate case against Planned

more air time during the crowded debate than he did in the first event last month, but when given the opportunity, he offered few specifics on major issues such as immigration and national security.

"Real leadership is what I would hopefully bring to America," Carson said in a tentative closing statement. Wednesday's focus on substance played to the strengths of a handful of candidates, among them former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio.

"You should ask him questions in detail about the foreign policy issues our president will confront, because you had better be able to lead our country on the first day," Rubio charged when asked about Trump's recent struggle to answer questions about world leaders. "I will know more about the problems of this world by the time I sit (in the White House)," Trump said, noting that he didn't know as much about international affairs because he doesn't have the experience that Rubio does as a member of the Senate.

Back-and-forth

Christie, mired at the bottom of the preference polls used to select which candidates get to take part in the GOP's debates, made waves by making the case to Trump and Fiorina alike that voters don't much care about their resumes. "While I'm as entertained as anyone by this personal back-and-forth about the history of Donald and Carly's career," he said, "for the 55-year-old construction worker out in that audience tonight who doesn't have a job, who can't fund his child's education - I gotta tell you the truth - they could care less about your careers."

Bush flashed a clear knowledge of the issues - and his lack of smoothness as a speaker. But confronted with what some consider being his greatest political liability, his last name, the son of one president and brother of another scored points with the crowd after Trump said, "Your brother's administration gave us Barack Obama." Clearly prepared for the attack, Bush shot back, "As it relates to my brother, there's one thing I know for sure: He kept us safe," Bush said as the crowd erupted in applause. — AP



SIMI VALLEY: Republican presidential candidates, former Florida Gov Jeb Bush and Donald Trump both speak during the CNN Republican presidential debate.

It was a night that allowed others to shine, however briefly, as they showed off their command of issues and talked with precision about what they'd do if elected president. After dominating the first debate a month ago, Trump faced fierce criticism from his Republican rivals from the outset of the debate at the Reagan Presidential Library outside Los Angeles. He disappeared for long stretches and even acknowledged at one point that he has a lot yet to learn about global affairs. The former reality television star avoided any major gaffes, yet delivered an underwhelming performance by the conventional standards of presidential politics. "He had his tail between his legs tonight," said Republican strategist Kevin Madden.

Parenthood and spoke in specifics when talking about foreign affairs.

She delivered one of the debate's most memorable moments when responding to a derogatory comment Trump made in a recent interview about her looks. Fiorina said simply, "I think women all over this country heard very clearly what Mr Trump said," winning the first ovation of the night from the live audience.

Trump responded, "I think she's got a beautiful face, and I think she's a beautiful woman" - a line that won few cheers, if any at all. The third Republican outsider, retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, maintained a positive outlook throughout the night in keeping with his image as the GOP's most likable candidate. Having surged in recent polls, he earned far

FOR MANY HISPANICS, TRUMP OFF THE WALL

LOS ANGELES: Roberto Centeno shrugs off Donald Trump's controversial remarks on Latinos-including suggestions that America should build a frontier wall to keep out the "rapists" he alleges Mexico sends across the border.

"The things that guy says do not represent Latinos. He can build all the walls he wants. We're not scared," said Centeno, reacting to Republican presidential candidate Trump's controversial remarks on immigration. "When the time comes, that guy is not going to get into the White House. This country has more sense than he does," the young Mexican, who works as a computer technician, told AFP.

Centeno said he would not miss Trump's performance at the debate Wednesday at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, where he clashed with ten challengers for their party's presidential nomination.

At that debate, Trump indeed took lots of shots from his many fellow hopefuls and immigration was in fact one of the issues that came up. Trump, the property mogul and television star who has defied all political odds to lead the Republican race ahead of the November 2016 election, stunned many across the United States when he described Mexican immigrants as rapists.

Hispanic-Americans are the largest and fastest growing US minority; most Latinos are of Mexican descent or origin. And Republicans need to court Hispanics' votes to win the White House. Trump, 69, also wants to build a wall along the US-Mexican border.

Fallout over wall

Though Trump lost business contracts with NBC television and some retailers, he still soared in a Republican field that includes Jeb Bush, and Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz. "Trump forgets how much power we have. Here in California we are already a majority. Nobody can ignore us," said Alfredo Rincon, another Mexican-born computer worker in Los Angeles.

US Census data backs him up: in the most populous US state Hispanics outnumber whites, Asian-Americans and African-Americans. Nationwide, Hispanics are the largest group tracked by the Census, with 55 million people. Many of the millions however are undocumented, most of them from Mexico next door.

Until they get citizenship, they cannot vote for president. "That guy goes on TV and says absolutely anything. But our time will come when we are all voting," said Enrique Cisneros, a stonemason from Guatemala. Pop stars such as Ricky Martin, Shakira and Marc Anthony have spoken out against Trump's harsh words about immigrants.

Cisneros' wife Guadalupe works as a waitress in a hotel, and is disappointed that President Barack Obama did not achieve sweeping immigration reform as he promised. "We gave him eight years to get it done," she said. "Now he is going to leave and nothing will have changed" for undocumented immigrants, estimated to number 12 million or more. Vice President Joe Biden on Tuesday described Trump's comments on immigration as "sick." "That one guy absolutely denigrated an entire group of people, appealing to the baser side of human nature," Biden told a group of Hispanic Americans. "This message has been tried on America many times before. We always, always, always, always overcome," he said.

Like Trump, Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal has urged ending the right to US citizenship by birth. Jindal is the son of immigrants from India. And Trump himself is the son of an immigrant from Scotland. And two of Trump's three wives have been immigrants. Jeb Bush, son and brother of former presidents, is married to a Mexican immigrant. — AFP



SIMI VALLEY: An unidentified audience member takes a selfie with Republican presidential candidate, businessman Donald Trump, during the CNN Republican presidential debate. — AP