

# WHAT RONALD REAGAN WOULD TELL THE GOP DEBATE PARTICIPANTS

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Everyone seems to have advice for the

GOP candidates, so, what the heck, I'll get in on the action too. Better yet, I'll shamelessly plagiarize Ronald Reagan—with whom I collaborated on two winning presidential campaigns.

It so happens that the first Republican primary debate is on Aug. 23, the 39th anniversary of Reagan's re-election acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in Dallas.

The current cast of White House contenders are engaged in unconstructive outrage rather than offering a clarifying pathway to reclaiming our government. On that sultry night in Texas, Reagan charted the latter course. The president presented a crucial distinction:

The Democrat Party was marked by “pessimism, fear and limits,” whereas the Republican Party offered “hope, confidence and growth.”

Reagan's words ring true today. He said the left “sees people only as members of groups,” always offering them grandiose—and unfulfilled—promises. Republicans serve “all the people of America as individuals” and “offer proven, workable answers.”

The president emphasized that “inflation was not some plague borne on the wind; it was a deliberate part of their official economic policy, needed, they said, to maintain prosperity.” That describes Joe Biden's Washington as well as Jimmy Carter's.

Reagan loved writing his own speeches—especially so in this case, after the Democrats had unfairly attacked

him at their convention in San Francisco a month before. You could tell how much he enjoyed editing this one, going to great lengths to remind the American people of the differences between the right and left.

That included the government's destructive intrusion into Americans' lives. As Reagan described it: "*Those whom government intended to help discovered a cycle of dependency that could not be broken. Government became a drug, providing temporary relief, but addiction as well.*"

When the candidates take the stage this evening (8/23), they should consider Reagan's messages of limited government and the keys to growth and prosperity.

He said that night: "*Our tax policies are and will remain pro-work, pro-growth, and pro-family. We intend to simplify the entire tax system—to make taxes more fair, easier to understand, and most important, to bring the tax rates of every American further down, not up.*"

Republicans shouldn't forget what will follow such prescriptions. As Reagan advised: "*Now, if we bring them down far enough, growth will continue strong; the underground economy will shrink; the world will beat a path to our door; and no one will be able to hold America back; and the future will be ours.*"

One final history lesson to everyone on the debate stage and those in the media who seem to have forgotten the provenance of a popular call to action.

In his Dallas speech, Reagan said, "*We came together in a national crusade to make America great again, and to make a new beginning.*" That was nothing new.

In his convention speech in 1980, he cheered, "*For those who have abandoned hope, we'll restore hope, and we'll welcome them into a great national crusade to make America great again!*"

And again, at the August 1988 GOP convention, he reprised his 1980 words by saying: "*We left with a mutual pledge to conduct a national crusade to make America great again.*" Yes, MAGA originated with Ronald Reagan.

Autumn leaves may soon be falling, but the stress and tensions of primary season are doubtless rising. The candidates should take a deep breath, ease up on the anger, and look to the source of the party's great principles. Cribbing from Reagan's notes won't get any debater in trouble this year.

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*Ken Khachigian was Ronald Reagan's chief speechwriter and director of issues and research for his 1984 re-election campaign.*

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