

GOP Primary Debate- Jan. 23, 2012- Sugar Program, Farm Subsidies.

MODERATOR

Speaker Gingrich, in Iowa you were a big supporter of ethanol subsidies. Here in Florida, sugar is a very important industry, and it's subsidized, as well, with import restrictions, quotas. There's a conservative movement to do away with these programs. In the case of sugar, critics say it -- it adds billions of dollars to -- to consumers' grocery bills every year. What would you do about that?



NEWT GINGRICH

Well, I pretty enthusiastically early in my career kept trying to figure out how to get away from the sugar subsidy. And I found out one of -- one of the fascinating things about America, which was that cane sugar hides behind beet sugar. And there are just too many beet sugar districts in the United States. It's an amazing side story about how interest groups operate.

In an ideal world, you would have an open market. And that's -- I think that would be a better future and, frankly, one where cane sugar would still make a lot of money. But it's very hard to imagine how you're going to get there. I spent a lot of time trying to reform agriculture when I was speaker. And I would say it was one of the two or three hardest things to try to do because the -- the capacity of the agricultural groups to defend themselves is pretty amazing.

MODERATOR

Governor Romney, you're going some campaign support from sugar growers. It's a very influential group in this state. What's your view on the sugar subsidies?



MITT ROMNEY

Yeah, my view is, we ought to get rid of subsidies and let markets work properly. But let's step back for a second, talk about what's really going on in Florida right now. And you know, you both know what's going on here.

I spent time this morning with -- with eight different individuals, listening to them talk about their circumstances. There are a lot of people in Florida that are hurting. You got a lot of homes underwater. This president came into office saying he'd turn this economy around, and everything he has done has made it harder for the people of Florida.