

YAHOO! NEWS

Bachmann called Social Security 'a tremendous fraud' in 2010



By [Chris Moody](#) | [The Ticket](#) - 5 hrs ago

At Monday's Republican presidential debate in Tampa, Fla, Michele Bachmann is [reportedly planning to criticize Rick Perry for calling Social Security "a Ponzi scheme,"](#) but she may want to tread lightly: Bachmann, who is trying to recapture some of the momentum her presidential campaign had built earlier this summer, made similar comments about the program just last year, and she also said last year that younger workers should be "weaned off" the program.

During [an interview with the Fox Business channel in February 2010,](#) Bachmann, a Republican representative from Minnesota, called Social Security's structure "a tremendous fraud" and said that anyone who ran a business modeled after the program would be "thrown in jail."

"It's a tremendous fraud," Bachmann told Fox Business host David Asman after he called the program "one of the biggest frauds ever perpetrated on the American public."

"No company could get away with this, they'd be thrown in jail if they ever tried to do what the federal government did with people's Social Security money," Bachmann said. "What we need to do very quickly is take the money that is coming in for Social Security, and truly lock it up so that we aren't putting it out the door anymore."

Bachmann spokeswoman Alice Stewart did not immediately return a request from The Ticket for comment.

[You can watch the video here.](#)

To be fair, while Bachmann and Perry have used similar rhetoric when talking about Social Security--calling the program a criminal fraud is pretty much the exact same thing as calling it a Ponzi scheme--the two candidates have discussed very



Bachmann, Romney and Perry (Jae C. Hong/AP)

different approaches when it comes to substantive reforms of the program. Perry, the Texas governor who has quickly become the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, told the Daily Beast in August that he would like "a legitimate conversation" about whether [the program ought to be administered by each of the 50 states](#). Bachmann, on the other hand, has mentioned changing the eligibility age for Social Security, reducing or eliminating the program for high-income people, and privatizing the program for younger workers by giving them individual accounts similar to a 401k.

Bachmann and Perry have been careful to say that Social Security should not be changed for those who have paid into the system their entire lives, and that older workers and retirees should remain within the current system. For everyone else, Bachmann has said they should be "weaned off" the program's current structure and--[like Perry says now](#)--she said, "we just have to be straight with people."

"[W]hat you have to do is keep faith with the people that are already in the system, that don't have any other options, we have to keep faith with them," Bachmann [said at an event in St. Louis, Missouri in February 2010](#). "But basically what we have to do is wean everybody else off. And wean everybody off because we have to take those unfunded net liabilities off our bank sheet, we can't do it. So we just have to be straight with people."

Bachmann took [heavy criticism](#) for her remarks, which Dave Dziok, Bachmann's spokesman at the time, later clarified.

"When she used the word 'weaning' people off of Social Security and all that, what she said is she's weaning people off how it is in its current form and we've got to find other ways to administer these programs," [Dziok told the Star-Tribune](#). "She's all for Social Security, all for Medicare and all that--so we don't want to see that go away."

Mitt Romney has led the charge against Perry's Social Security rhetoric, attacking the Texas governor several times for calling the program, among other things, "a monstrous lie" to young people.

But like Bachmann, Romney has used similar rhetoric in the past. In "No Apology," the former Massachusetts governor's book that was published in 2010, Romney wrote that "the American people have been [effectively defrauded out of their Social Security](#)" and that anyone who ran a similar program "would go to jail."

Update: Sept. 12, 1:34 p.m. ET Romney and Bachmann might not be the only candidates at Monday's debate who go after Perry's provocative statements about Social Security. Jon Huntsman, the former Utah governor and ambassador to China, told Jan Crawford of CBS News that Perry's words will cost Republicans the election if Perry becomes the nominee. Republicans "may as well hang up the election," Huntsman said, [Crawford reported on Twitter](#).

Huntsman also [compared Perry to Barry Goldwater](#), the Republican presidential nominee who lost to Lyndon Johnson in a landslide, Crawford reported in a second tweet. "Could be 1964 all over again," Huntsman said.

Editor's Note: *This article has been changed to clarify Perry's position on Social Security for older workers and retirees.*

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