



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 14, 2022

GOP Withdraws From Commission on Presidential Debates

Citing anti-Republican bias in how past presidential debates have been handled, on Thursday the Republican National Committee (RNC) voted unanimously to withdraw from the Commission on Presidential Debates, which has run presidential and vice-presidential debates since 1988.

The RNC voted to require Republican presidential candidates to attest in writing that they will appear in only GOP-sanctioned debates.

In a [statement](#), RNC Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel claimed that the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) was biased and refused to consider reforms to the process that might make them more fair.

"Debates are an important part of the democratic process, and the RNC is committed to free and fair debates. The Commission on Presidential Debates is biased and has refused to enact simple and commonsense reforms to help ensure fair debates including hosting debates before voting begins and selecting moderators who have never worked for candidates on the debate stage," McDaniel said.

The RNC complained of many missteps made by the CPD in 2020, including:

- Waiting until 26 states had begun early voting before hosting the first presidential debate in 2020.

- Making unilateral changes to previously agreed-upon debate formats and conditions, in some cases without even notifying the candidates.

- Selecting a moderator in 2020 who had once worked for Joe Biden. [Steve Scully interned for Biden in 1978.]

The RNC did not back away from debates altogether, and vowed to find a new way to go forward. According to an RNC press release, the decision to move on from the CPD "is the culmination of a year-long process."

"We are going to find newer, better debate platforms to ensure that future nominees are not forced to go through the biased CPD in order to make their case to the American people," the release said.

The RNC had previously threatened to abandon the CPD and had warned the commission against fundraising based on the GOP's continued participation in the debates — especially without reforms to the process. They also complained that the CPD had publicly denounced former President Trump.

While the GOP accused the commission of bias, their Democratic counterparts sounded playground taunts about the RNC being scared.



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"The @GOP can only survive in a carefully managed media-political environment free from even the hint of tough, independent questions," tweeted Democratic strategist Max Burns.

"Voters can count on hearing from President Biden and Vice President (Kamala) Harris, who are proud of their records," said DNC chairperson Jaime Harrison.

During the 2020 campaign, President Donald Trump had several complaints about the debate process and refused to participate in a "virtual" debate following his bout with COVID-19. Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien criticized the commission as being biased against Trump, despite describing themselves as a "private, nonpartisan, 501c3, independent organization."

Stepien quoted the CPD's own website: "It is not controlled by any political party or outside organization, and it does not endorse or support or oppose candidates, political candidates, or parties."

"Last time I checked, the definition of nonpartisan is one of being not biased or partisan, especially toward any particular candidate or particular political group," Stepien said. "Those characterizations could not be further from the truth."

Hopefully, in the end, this will signal an end to the presidential debate formats in their current form. The events have become nothing more than dog and pony shows where candidates spew talking points and news anchors and pundits are only interested if a candidate slips up in some way.

Something truly interesting would be if the candidates would participate in a long-form, sit-down meeting not limited to an hour, where they could actually speak candidly about the issues. Joe Rogan offered to moderate such a discussion in 2020. If you recall, Donald Trump was all-in for such an event, while the Democrats in charge of Joe Biden were not.



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