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Republican Presidential Candidates Should No Longer Agree to Serve as Punching Bags in One-sided Debates

Since the 2020 election, Republican voters have been waiting for some toughness from Republican leadership and other major players within the Party. Last week, the Republican National Committee (RNC) took a step in the right direction.

As reported by [Fox News](#), in a recent letter from the RNC to the Commission on [Presidential Debates](#) (CPD), “the committee said that it will require its presidential candidates running in the [2024 election](#) cycle to pledge not to participate in debates run by the CPD.” Republicans should hail this decision.

According to the [CPD website](#), “The CPD was formed to ensure that the voting public has the opportunity to see the leading candidates debate during the general election campaign.” However, [presidential debates](#), for example, are not required.

The presidential and vice-presidential debates should, presumably, offer the candidates the opportunity to discuss their position(s) on the major issues impacting Americans and the nation. Toward that end, the moderators should be fair and objective and should not allow their personal opinions and/or animosity toward a particular candidate or political party impair the way they treat the candidates. Sadly, recent debates have veered far away from this objective and have morphed into nothing more than a coordinated hit-job by the various moderators against the Republican candidate(s).

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How, exactly, are the moderators selected? Apparently, the [CPD](#) “uses three criteria to select its moderators: a) familiarity with the candidates and the major issues of the presidential campaign; b) extensive experience in live television broadcast news; and c) an understanding that the debate should focus maximum time and attention on the candidates and their views.”

Despite this selection process, there is no guarantee that those selected will be free from political bias nor are there any assurances that the moderators will treat each candidate with the requisite level of neutrality and fairness. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 2020 debates.

During the 2020 debates for president and vice-president, Chris Wallace moderated the first presidential debate while Susan Page moderated the vice-presidential debate. As reported by the [City-Journal](#):

At the first presidential debate, Chris Wallace hammered President Trump, offering up Biden campaign talking points — such as Obama-era job-creation data — while repeatedly scolding the president, chiding him for failing to “come up with a comprehensive plan to replace Obamacare,” “either contradicting or being at odds with (his) government’s own top scientists,” and “holding large rallies with crowds packed together, thousands of people,” among other digs posing as questions. Wallace had no correspondingly stern lectures for Biden. He asked the former vice president few challenging questions and let him dodge even those with no follow-ups.

Trump and Biden subsequently took part in separate, yet simultaneous, town halls. During Trump’s town hall, [Savannah Guthrie](#) questioned Trump on many irrelevant issues to embarrass him and to try to hurt his image in the eyes of the American public. For the most part, she engaged in “gotcha” techniques with the president and resorted to [personal](#) attacks rather than asking him about the issues that mattered most to Americans. On the other hand, during Biden’s town hall, George Stephanopoulos treated Biden with kid gloves and [failed](#) to question him about the allegations involving his son, Hunter.

Finally, the third debate was moderated by [Kristen Welker](#). As reported by the [City-Journal](#), Welker was deeply tied to the Democratic Party, celebrated Christmas with the Obamas, was a registered Democrat as recently as 2012, and her parents were [big donors](#) to the Democratic Party.

Given what transpired in 2020, there is no conceivable reason for a Republican candidate to participate in a one-sided debate. While debates provide the candidates with a wonderful opportunity to discuss their perspectives on important issues, their current format and the glaring bias against Republican candidates make such efforts useless.

Moreover, the candidates are at the mercy of the moderator(s) and have no control over the questions posed by the moderators. Additionally, they only have a short period of time to answer the various questions and need the moderator’s “permission” to clarify a point or to respond to the other candidate’s answers.

Given what transpired in 2020 and the obvious favoritism in favor of the Democratic candidates in general, any Republican candidate would be at a tremendous and virtually insurmountable disadvantage during a debate moderated by a CPD selected moderator.

Until this changes, and safeguards are put in place to prevent such treatment, Republican presidential candidates should refuse to participate in such debates.