Paul Ryan Sinks Himself in VP Debate With Joe Biden

Congressman Paul Ryan spoke clearly during Thursday's vice presidential debate at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. But he failed to articulate any substantial differences between the Republican political team he represented and the Obama administration represented by Vice President Joe Biden.

Perhaps the best two-liner of the night was Biden's "What would my friend do differently? If you notice, he never answers the question."

Ryan criticized the Obama administration on issue after issue, including sanctions against Iran, withdrawal from Iraq, and spending. Yet he failed to provide any specifics about how the Romney-Ryan team would offer a significant change from the Obama administration.

"This is not what a real recovery looks like," Ryan said during the debate. "We're offering real reforms for a real recovery for every American." But when moderator and ABC News reporter Martha Raddatz asked Ryan to articulate the details of the Romney-Ryan tax plan to cut tax rates across the board and eliminate loopholes, the Wisconsin congressman repeatedly declined to offer specifics:

> **Radditz:** "You have refused — and again — to offer specifics on how you pay for that 20 percent across the board tax cut. Do you actually have the specifics, or are you still working it, and that's why you won't tell voters?"
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> **Ryan:** "Different than this administration, we actually want to have big, bi-partisan agreements. You see … "
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> **Radditz:** "Do you have the specifics? Do you have that? Do you know exactly what you are doing?
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> **[Cross-talk]**
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> **Ryan:** "Look at what Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill did. They worked together out of a framework to lower tax rates and broaden the base and they worked together to fix that. What we're saying is, here is our framework. Lower tax rates 20 percent. We raise about $1.2 trillion through income taxes. We forgo about $1.1 trillion in loopholes and deductions. And so what we are saying is, deny those loopholes and deductions to higher income taxpayers so that more of their income is taxed, which has a broader base of tax, so that we can lower tax rates across the board. Now, here's why I'm saying this. What we're saying is, here's the framework. We want to work with Congress on how best to achieve this. That means successful.
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> **Radditz:** "But no specifics again."
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> **Ryan:** "What we're saying is, lower tax rates 20 percent. Start with the wealthy, work with Congress to do it."
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> **Radditz:** "Can you guarantee that this math will add up?"
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> **Ryan:** "Absolutely. Six studies have guaranteed — six studies have verified that this math adds up."

Vice President Joe Biden — who repeatedly interrupted Ryan— countered with the argument: "Let me translate. First of all, I was there when Ronald Reagan tax rates — he gave specifics of what he was going to cut. Number one, in terms of tax expenditures."

Biden may have a point about specifics. If Romney is elected President, he will be required by the 1921 Budget and Accounting Act to provide a specific tax and spending proposal to Congress.

Ryan may have been the best quip of the evening, however, suggesting of Biden's criticism of Mitt Romney's 47 percent quote: "With respect to that quote, I think the Vice President very well knows that sometimes the words don't come out of your mouth the right way."

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