



Written by [James Murphy](#) on October 8, 2020

President Trump Declares He Won't Participate in Virtual Debate

Just hours after the Commission on Presidential Debates announced that the second debate between President Donald Trump and Democrat challenger Joe Biden would be a virtual event, Trump nixed the idea, saying he wouldn't waste his time with such an event.

Trump made the declaration in an [interview](#) with Fox Business Channel anchor Maria Bartiromo, saying that such a format was "not acceptable to us."

"I'm not going to waste my time on a virtual debate," the president said. "That's not what debating is all about. You sit behind a computer and do a debate. It's ridiculous, and then they cut you off whenever they want."



AP Images

The Commission on Presidential Debates released a [statement](#) early this morning saying that the town-hall style debate scheduled for October 15 would be a virtual affair. According to the statement, the decision was made "in order to protect the health and safety of all involved with the second presidential debate."

"The second presidential debate will take the form of a town meeting, in which the candidates would participate from separate remote locations," the statement read.

Although they never come right out and say it, the CPD's decision to make the debate virtual was likely influenced by the president's COVID-19 diagnosis. Over last weekend, Trump was treated at Walter Reed Medical Center for the virus. He was released on Sunday evening after reportedly responding well to treatment.

Trump claims that the CPD's decision was made unilaterally, without any input from his campaign.

"They didn't even tell us about the debate, Maria," Trump told Bartiromo. "We learned it the same way you learned it. They called up two minutes ago and it was announced."

Trump claimed the decision to hold a virtual debate is an attempt to insulate Biden from scrutiny. At times during the campaign season, the former vice president has looked confused and has struggled to finish sentences when off the teleprompter.

"They're trying to protect Biden, everybody is. Like that NBC disaster when he went on the show with Lester Holt. It was meant for a child. It wasn't meant for a grown person," Trump said.

The Trump campaign quickly blasted the CPD's decision. Campaign manager Bill Stepien released a statement of his own in which he referred to the decision to make the debate virtual as "pathetic."



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“For the swamp creatures at the Presidential Debate Commission to now rush to Joe Biden’s defense by unilaterally canceling an in-person debate is pathetic. That’s not what debates are about or how they’re done,” Stepien said.

“Here are the facts: President Trump will have posted multiple negative tests prior to the debate, so there is no need for this unilateral declaration,” Stepien said. “The safety of all involved can easily be achieved without canceling a chance for voters to see both candidates go head to head. We’ll pass on this sad excuse to bail out Joe Biden and do a rally instead.”

The Biden campaign is looking forward to some sort of event on October 15. Biden had previously declared that if Trump was still testing positive for COVID-19, the next debate should be canceled.

In a [statement](#), Biden’s Deputy Campaign Manager Kate Bedingfield announced that the Biden camp would “find an appropriate place to take questions from voters directly on October 15, as he has done on several occasions in recent weeks.”

President Trump’s COVID-19 diagnosis changed everything with regard to the debates. The virus gave the allegedly objective CPD the opportunity to assist the Biden campaign by making the second debate virtual. Now Biden can continue to hide and answer staged questions from friendly hand-picked voters, all while portraying Trump as the one who is afraid of scrutiny.

While next week’s debate looks like it’s not going to happen, another debate is still scheduled for October 22.



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