

The Final 2020 Presidential Debate

The final debate of the 2020 Presidential election season was held on Thursday, October 22nd, at the Curb Event Center at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. This was originally scheduled to be the third debate in the series but became the second and final debate when a debate scheduled for October 15th was canceled. Because of the repeated interruptions by President Trump during the first debate, the Commission on Presidential Debates implemented the policy of muting the microphones of each candidate during the initial two minute response period given to the other opponent. This was generally seen as a successful tactic by most viewers.

The Moderator

The debate was moderated by White House correspondent and Weekend Today co-anchor Kristen Welker. Welker was praised by all parties for her handling of the debate, which did stay much more on track than the first and actually did manage to get down to addressing the issues.

The Issues

The debate was divided into six parts to address six distinct issues. Each candidate was given the opportunity to state his position and address all points.

Fighting COVID-19

The position of each candidate could not have been more clear here. President Trump painted a picture of a world where the disease is already past, denying any type of future danger and any kind of responsibility for a poor response to the pandemic. In fact, when Trump was asked if he takes any responsibility for the response to COVID-19, he said, "I take full responsibility. It's not my fault that it came here. It's China's fault." Joe Biden made clear that his position is to follow the science and recommendations of the country's leading doctors. He supports reopening the country, but with a plan and some restrictions.

American Families

The Affordable Care Act was discussed. Biden would like to add a public option to the ACA, which he dubbed, 'Biden Care.' Trump said that he wants to terminate Obamacare for a better plan that he has not yet come up with. This is the same general rhetoric Trump has run with in the past.

When it comes to economic relief for those impacted by COVID-19, Trump blamed Nancy Pelosi for no new legislation being passed, although Pelosi is still in negotiations with Trump representatives about such matters. Biden reminded the audience that the Democratic-held House passed this type of legislation long ago. Biden reaffirmed his support of raising the minimum wage, while Trump restated his opinion that minimum wage is an issue for the states.

Race In America

While Biden seemed sympathetic to racial issues, he was overshadowed by Trump's claim that he is the least racist "person in the room" and that he had done "more for African Americans than any other President than maybe Abraham Lincoln."

Climate Change

Trump made outlandish claims, including that he knows more about wind energy than Biden and that wind turbines kill all of the birds. He also falsely claimed the United States has the lowest carbon emissions since the '90s and called Russia, China, and India dirty.

Biden addressed actual policy, saying that he would propose a plan to move the United States forward from fossil fuels to renewable energy and that he would rejoin the historic Paris Agreement on climate change.

In an interesting and distinct show of the differences in the candidates, when asked about families of color who are more likely to live near refineries, Biden was sympathetic to the health and welfare concerns of these families, while Trump remarked that the families make good wages at these refineries.

National Security

Trump managed to dodge questions about Russia while falsely claiming that Biden had taken money from Russia. Biden, to his credit, promised that any country that interferes in United States elections would "pay a price."

Trump bragged about his friendship with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, who Biden called a thug.

On immigration, Biden proposed a path to citizenship and promised to reinstate DACA. Trump, on the other hand, bragged about the partial building of his wall and blamed the separation of 545 children from their parents under his administration on Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Leadership

The leadership question posed was about what each would say in their Inaugural address if they won. Trump talked about the economy. Biden said that he would call for unity and address that he is the President for each and every person, whether they voted for him or not.

Reception

According to the post-debate poll done by CNN, about 53% of people thought Biden won the debate, with around 39% feeling that Trump had won. It seems that Trump is a cult of personality and that most of those who follow him do so regardless of his performance in any facet. Biden definitely won over some independent voters with his policy positions, Presidential behavior, and well-reasoned answers.

Conclusion

This debate did a great job showcasing the personalities and real policy positions of both candidates. Biden was able to show his intellect and compassion, while Trump made clear the importance he places on money above all else, including the safety and security of this nation. Trump did his best to avoid any talk of policy and presented no real plans for the future. Biden laid out his positions clearly and showed how he would lead America into the future.