

**July 7, 2016**  
**For Immediate Release**

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## **Commission on Presidential Debates Announces Format for 2016 General Election Debates**

The nonpartisan, nonprofit Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) today announced the formats for the three presidential and one vice presidential general election debates it will sponsor this fall.

The formats for the 90-minute debates are designed to facilitate in-depth discussion of the leading issues facing the nation.

### **First presidential debate (September 26, 2016, Wright State University, Dayton, OH)**

The debate will be divided into six time segments of approximately 15 minutes each on major topics to be selected by the moderator and announced at least one week before the debate.

The moderator will open each segment with a question, after which each candidate will have two minutes to respond.

Candidates will then have an opportunity to respond to each other. The moderator will use the balance of the time in the segment for a deeper discussion of the topic.

### **Vice presidential debate (October 4, 2016, Longwood University, Farmville, VA)**

The debate will be divided into nine time segments of approximately 10 minutes each. The moderator will ask an opening question, after which each candidate will have two minutes to respond. The moderator will use the balance of the time in the segment for a deeper discussion of the topic.

**Second presidential debate (October 9, 2016, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO)**

The second presidential debate will take the form of a town meeting, in which half of the questions will be posed directly by citizen participants and the other half will be posed by the moderator based on topics of broad public interest as reflected in social media and other sources. The candidates will have two minutes to respond and there will be an additional minute for the moderator to facilitate further discussion. The town meeting participants will be uncommitted voters selected by the Gallup Organization.

**Third presidential debate (October 19, 2016, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV)**

The format for the debate will be identical to the first presidential debate.

All debates will be moderated by a single individual and will run from 9:00-10:30 p.m. Eastern Time without commercial breaks. As always, the moderators alone will select the questions to be asked, which are not known to the CPD or to the candidates. The moderators will have the ability both to extend the segments and to ensure that the candidates have equal speaking time. While the focus will properly be on the candidates, the moderator will regulate the conversation so that thoughtful and substantive exchanges occur. The CPD is in discussion with technology and civic groups that will provide data to the moderators to assist them in identifying the subjects that are most important to the public.

This year's debates will build on the successful 2012 debate formats which introduced longer segments, allowing the candidates to focus on critical issues. "The CPD has a simple mission, to ensure that presidential debates help the public learn about the positions of the leading candidates for president and vice president," CPD Co-Chairs Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr. and Michael D. McCurry said. "These formats will allow an in-depth exploration of the major topics in this year's election."

In the fall of 2015, the CPD announced the [dates and venues](#) and its [2016 Nonpartisan Candidate Selection Criteria](#). Under the criteria, in addition to being constitutionally eligible, candidates must:

- Appear on a sufficient number of state ballots to have a mathematical chance of winning a majority vote in the Electoral College.
- Have a level of support of at least 15 percent of the national electorate as determined by five selected national public opinion polling organizations, using the average of those organizations' most recently publicly-reported results at the time of the determination.

The CPD will select and announce moderators later this summer.

In September, the CPD will announce an unprecedented effort to engage the American public in substantive conversations before, between and after the debates. The increased use of technology to consume news presents an opportunity to amplify and enhance the debates. Over the last two years, the CPD has met with more than 40 technology, academic and media organizations to discuss these trends and to identify best practices to engage the electorate, particularly young people, in the political conversation. Some of these initiatives are already underway, such as [College Debate 2016](#), which is building a social conversation among students on college campuses across the country, and [Join the Debates](#), a partnership to help teachers generate discussion in the classroom.

“The public would like to take part in a civil discussion, both online and in-person,” McCurry and Fahrenkopf said. “Our goal is to make the tools available so that the debates can reach all Americans, particularly those who will be voting for the first time.”

## About CPD

The CPD has sponsored and produced all the general election presidential and vice presidential debates since 1988. The CPD is a private, nonpartisan 501(c) (3) voter education organization, which has no connection to nor receives funding from any political party, government entity or political action committee. More information can be found at [www.debates.org](http://www.debates.org). In addition to the Co-Chairs, the current Board consists of the following distinguished Americans, all of whom volunteer their time to serve on the CPD Board:

- Howard G. Buffett, *Chairman and CEO, The Howard G. Buffett Foundation*
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