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COMMISSION ON PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES ANNOUNCES 2012 GENERAL ELECTION DEBATES FORMAT

Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr. and Michael D. McCurry, co-chairmen of the non-partisan, non-profit Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD), today announced formats for the presidential and vice presidential debates that feature extended discussion of major issues to be announced in advance.

The formats for the 90-minute debates are as follows:

First presidential debate (October 3, 2012, University of Denver, Denver, CO)

The debate will focus on domestic policy and be divided into six time segments of approximately 15 minutes each on topics to be selected by the moderator and announced several weeks before the debate.

The moderator will open each segment with a 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 discussion of the topic.

Vice presidential debate (October 11, 2012, Centre College, Danville, KY)

The debate will cover both foreign and domestic topics and 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 discussion of the question.

Second presidential debate (October 16, 2012, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY)

The second presidential debate will take the form of a town meeting, in which citizens will ask questions of the candidates on foreign and domestic issues. Candidates each will have two minutes to respond, and an additional minute for the moderator to facilitate a discussion. The town meeting participants will be undecided voters selected by the Gallup Organization.

Third presidential debate (October 22, Lynn University, Boca Raton, FL)

The format for the debate will be identical to the first presidential debate and will focus on foreign policy.

Co-chairmen

Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr.
Michael D. McCurry

Executive Director

Janet H. Brown

Honorary Co-chairmen

Gerald R. Ford[†]
Jimmy Carter
Ronald Reagan[†]
William J. Clinton

[†]Deceased

Co-Chairman Emeritus

Paul G. Kirk, Jr.

Directors

Howard G. Buffett
John C. Danforth
John Griffen
Antonia Hernandez
Reverend John I. Jenkins

Newton N. Minow
Richard D. Parsons
Dorothy Ridings
Alan K. Simpson

All debates will be moderated by a single individual and will take place from 9:00-10:30 p.m. Eastern Time. There will be no opening statements and two-minute closing statements in all the debates. In all the debates except town meeting, the CPD recommends that the candidates be seated at a table with the moderator. Moderators will be selected and announced in August.

In addition, the CPD is undertaking an innovative internet-based voter education program that will encourage citizens to become familiar with the issues to be discussed in the debates, and to share their input with the debate moderators in advance of the debates. The program, which will be announced later this month, will be led by a coalition of internet leaders.

Fahrenkopf and McCurry said that the formats reflect extensive study by the CPD board of directors: "There are serious issues facing this country and the public has the right to expect a serious examination of those issues during this fall's debates. The CPD believes this can be accomplished best by focusing big time blocks on major domestic and foreign topics. The topics will be selected and announced in advance of the debates by the debate moderators.

"The debates are the most widely-watched political programs of any kind. These format changes are designed to promote substantive dialogue before, during and between the debates about the major issues of the day. They will permit citizens and candidates to come prepared for a series of voter education forums that inform and engage the public.

"Coupled with the internet program, the debates will serve as the foundation for a season of conversation this fall. Technology offers the means to provide and receive information – the CPD is committed to using this tool creatively and effectively to bring as many people as possible into the conversation."

The CPD has sponsored and produced all the presidential and vice presidential debates since 1987, the year it was established. More information can be found at www.debates.org.