

U.S. General Election Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions 1988 to 2016

1988 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:

September 25, 1988

The First Bush-Dukakis Presidential Debate

- The polls say the number one domestic issue to a majority of voters is drugs. What is there about these times that drives or draws so many Americans to use drugs?
- Are you suggesting, sir, that President Reagan is one of the causes of the drug problem in this country?
- Governor Dukakis, another troublesome issue for voters this year is the bulging federal deficit. In a Dukakis administration, you say taxes will be raised only as a last resort. Would you identify for us then please three specific programs that you are willing to cut to bring that deficit down?
- Mr. Vice President, you have vowed not to raise taxes of any kind during your administration and at the same time you've proposed this capital gains cut, you've proposed more incentive breaks for the oil industry. You've suggested new spending programs and even some Republicans say the flexible freeze you just spoke about will hardly make a dent in the deficit. Is the deficit no longer really a concern of yours, the Republican Party or the taxpayers?
- Mr. Vice President, you've said you want a kinder, gentler presidency, one that helps the less fortunate. Today, 37 million Americans including many working families with aging parents and young children cannot afford any health insurance, but earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. What will you do to provide protection for them and how will you pay for it?
- Yes. Since your Massachusetts health plan has been attacked by the Vice President and you have defended it in this way, I would like to move on to perhaps one of the most costly medical catastrophes facing Americans today and that is AIDS. In - at the end of September, the thousands of AIDS patients will lose their access to AZT, which is the only Federally approved drug for treatment of the disease. Now, I'd like to now, sir, if - what your position is on extending that and what it is you think the government ought to be doing about making AZT and other drugs available to people who are suffering from this disease.
- Good evening, Mr. Vice President, Governor. Governor, one theme that keeps coming up about the way you govern - you've both mentioned leadership tonight, so I'd like to stay with that for a second. The theme that keeps coming up about the way you govern is passionless, technocratic - Passionless, technocratic, the smartest clerk in the world. Your critics maintain that in the 1960's your public passion was not the war in Vietnam or civil rights, but no fault auto insurance. And they say in the 1970's you played virtually no role in the painful busing crisis in Boston. Given the fact

that a president must sometimes lead by sheer inspiration and passion. We need to know if this is a fair portrait of your governing or if it is a stereotype. And if it isn't fair, give us an example of where you have had that passion and leadership that sometimes a president needs?

- I'd actually like to follow up if I may on this mention you've made of his card carrying membership in the American Civil Liberties Union. You've used the phrase "card carrying" so many times since Governor Dukakis first acknowledged that he was a card carrying member of the ACLU that some people have come to believe that you've used it to brand him in some way, to identify him as people were identified in the 1950's as less than patriotic. I'd like to know why you keep repeating the phrase, and what's the important issue here? What is so wrong with the governor being a member of an organization which has come to the defense of, among other people, Colonel Oliver North?
- Mr. Vice President, in a debate during the Republican primaries, you said most of the nation's homeless are suffering from mental illness, an assertion immediately challenged by one of your rivals. Estimates of the homeless range from a low of 250,000 by the government, to around three million, including working families and their children. What commitment are you willing to make tonight to this voiceless segment of our society?
- Governor, you've mentioned the American dream of home ownership, and it's certainly become an impossible one for many of the young people of our nation who are caught up in this economic squeeze of the middle class, as you've said so frequently during the campaign. And yet in spite of your answer just a few minutes ago, what promise can you realistically hold out to these people that with the costs of housing going up, and with limited help available from Washington, are we destined to become a nation of renters?
- Governor Dukakis, is there a conflict between your opposition to the death penalty and your support for abortion on demand, even though in the minds of many people, that's also killing?
- Yes. Mr. Vice President, I'd like to stay with abortion for just a moment if I might. Over the years you have expressed several positions, while opposing nearly all forms of government payment for it. You now say that you support abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or threat to a mother's life, and you also support a constitutional amendment that if ratified would outlaw most abortions. But if abortions were to become illegal again, do you think that the women who defy the law and have them anyway, as they did before it was okayed by the Supreme Court, and the doctors who perform them should go to jail?
- Mr. Vice President, I'm struck by your discussion of women and the sanctity of life. And it leads me to recall your own phrase, that you are haunted by the lives which children in our inner cities live. Certainly the evidence is compelling. There's an explosion of single parent families. And by any measure, these single parent families, many with unwanted children, are the source of poverty, school drop outs, crime, which many people in the inner city simply feel is out of control. If it haunts you so, why over the eight years of the Reagan-Bush administration have so many programs designed to help the inner cities been eliminated or cut?

- Governor, the crisis is no less a crisis for you if you are elected president. Where would you get the money to devote to the inner cities which is clearly needed. And can you be specific about the programs not only you'd reinstate, but the more imaginative ones that you'd begin.
- Governor, the vice president continually refers to your lack of experience, weakness, naivete on foreign policy and national security matters. He says you are prepared to eliminate weapons system that will result in the unilateral disarmament of this country. Is that true?
- Mr. Vice President, the governor has suggested that you've never met a weapons system that you didn't like or want. Are you prepared to tell the voters one system in this time of tight budgetary restraints and problems at the Pentagon that you'd be willing to cut or even eliminate that wouldn't endanger national security?
- Well, Mr. Vice President, you said you've met with Secretary General Gorbachev, you've met with Mr. Shevardnadze, but for the last forty years Americans have been taught to regard the Soviet Union as the enemy. Yet, President Reagan has signed two arms control treaties and he's promised to share Star Wars technology with the very country he once called the evil empire. So, perhaps you can tell us this evening, should we be doing a lot to help the economics and the social development of a country that we have so long regarded as an adversary?
- Yes. Governor Dukakis, speaking of seeming changes of position, you have gone from calling the Strategic Defense Initiative, or Star Wars, a fantasy and a fraud, to saying recently that you would continue SDI research and might even deploy the system if Congress supported such a move. Why the change of heart?
- Well, Governor, and Vice President Bush, you've both talked tonight about hard choices. Let me try to give you one. Somewhere in the Middle East tonight, nine Americans are being held hostage. If you are commander-in-chief and Americans are held hostage, what will be more important to you, their individual fate, or the commitment that the United States Government must never negotiate with terrorists. And if any Americans are held hostage and you become president, to what lengths would you go to rescue them?
- It seems perhaps a good subject, Mr. Vice President, on which to make the point that you've campaigned vigorously as part of a leadership team. But so far you won't tell the American people in considerable measure what advice you gave the president, including the sale of arms to Iran and what should have been done about the hostages. To the best of my knowledge there's no Constitutional requirement which prevents you from doing so. Jimmy Carter urged his Vice President, Walter Mondale, to tell the American people. Would you now ask President Reagan for permission to tell the American people what advice you did give him? And if you don't, how do we judge your judgment in the Oval Office in the last eight years?
- Mr. Vice President, Democrats and even some Republicans are still expressing reservations about the qualifications and credentials of Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana, your chosen running mate, to be a heartbeat away from the presidency. What do you see in him that others do not?

- Well, Governor, you did select Lloyd Bentsen of Texas. And you have a lot of disagreement with him on fundamental issues, including the Reagan tax cuts, aid to the rebels in Nicaragua, the death penalty, gun control. Who's right?
- Governor Dukakis, as many U.S. farmers face or undergo foreclosure, the United States is considering the possibility of forgiving a certain percentage of debt owed by Latin American and Third World countries, do you favor giving these countries a break in their loans and, if so, how do you explain that to the American farmers who are losing their land and livelihood?

October 13, 1988

The Second Bush-Dukakis Presidential Debate

- Governor, if Kitty Dukakis were raped and murdered, would you favor an irrevocable death penalty for the killer?
- Now to you, Vice President Bush. I quote to you this from Article III of the 20th amendment to the Constitution. Quote: "If at the time fixed for the beginning of the term of the President the President-elect shall have died, the Vice President elect shall become president," meaning, if you are elected and die before inauguration day automatically, Dan Quayle would become the 41st President of the United States. What have you to say about that possibility?
- Mr. Vice President, yes, we read your lips: no new taxes. But despite that same pledge from President Reagan, after income tax rates were cut, in each of the last five years, some Federal taxes have gone up, on Social Security, cigarettes, liquor, even long distance telephone calls. Now that's money straight out of people's wallets. Isn't the phrase, no new taxes, misleading the voters?
- Governor, let me follow up on that by asking you you've said it many times that you have balanced ten budgets in a row in Massachusetts. Are you promising the American people here tonight that within a four-year presidential term, you will balance the federal budget?
- Good evening, Governor, Mr. Vice President. Governor, you won the first debate on intellect, and yet you lost it on heart. The American public admired your performance, but didn't seem to like you much. Now, Ronald Reagan has found his personal warmth to be a tremendous political asset. Do you think that a president has to be likable to be an effective leader?
- I'd like to follow up on that Mr. Vice President. The tenor of the campaign you've been running, in terms of both the issues and your rhetoric has surprised even some of your friends. Senator Mark Hatfield who's known your family a long time and who knew your father, the late Senator Prescott Bush, said, and I quote, "If his father were alive today, I'm sure his father would see it as a shocking transformation." Is Senator Hatfield right?
- Mr. Vice President, Governor. Mr. Vice President, let me return for a moment to the issue of the budget, because so much has already been put off limits in your campaign that most people do not believe that the flexible freeze alone will solve the problem of the deficit. So, let's turn to defense

for a moment. Pentagon officials tell us that there is not enough money in the budget to handle military readiness, preparedness, as well as new weapons systems that have been proposed, as well as those already in the pipeline. You were asked in the first debate what new weapons systems you would cut. You mentioned three that had already been canceled. Can you tonight share with us three new weapons systems that you could?

- Governor, continuing on that subject, then, you say we have to do something about conventional forces. You have supported the submarine launch missile, the D-5 you just referred to. Yet, from Jerry Ford to Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan, there has been a bipartisan consensus in favor of modernizing the land based missiles. Now, you have ruled out the MX and the Midgetman. More recently, some of your aides have hinted at some flexibility you might show about some other new form of missile. Can you tell us tonight why you have rejected the wisdom of people as diverse as Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger, Al Gore, people in both parties and what type of land based missile would you consider?
- Governor, today they may call them role models, but they used to be called heroes, the kind of public figure who could inspire a whole generation, someone who was larger than life. My question is not, who your heroes were. My question instead is, who are the heroes who are there in American life today? Who are the ones who you would point out to young Americans as figures who should inspire this country?
- Let's change the pace a little bit, Mr. Vice President. In this campaign some hard and very bitter things have been spoken by each side about each side. If you'd consider for a moment Gov. Dukakis and his years of public service, is there anything nice you can say about him, anything you find admirable?
- Vice President Bush, abortion remains with us as a very troubling issue, and I'd like to explore that for a minute with you. You have said that you regard abortion as murder, yet you would make exceptions in the case of rape and incest. My question is, why should a woman who discovers through amniocentesis that her baby will be born with Tay-Sachs disease, for instance, that the baby will live at most two years, and those two years in incredible pain, be forced to carry the fetus to term, and yet a woman who becomes pregnant through incest would be allowed to abort her fetus?
- Governor, I'd like to return to the topic of the defense budget for a minute. You have said in this campaign that you would maintain a stable defense budget, yet you are on the board, on the advisory board of a group called Jobs with Peace, in Boston, that advocates a 25-percent cut in the defense budget and the transfer of that money to the domestic economy. My question is, do you share that goal perhaps as a long-range goal, and, if not, are you aware of or why do you permit this group to continue to use your name on its letterhead for fundraising?
- Governor, you've said tonight that you set as a goal the steady reduction of the deficit. And you've talked about making tough choices, so perhaps I can get you to make one of those tough choices. No credible economist in either party accepts as realistic your plan to handle the deficit by tightening tax collection, investing in economic growth, bringing down interest rates, and cutting

weapons systems and some domestic programs as well. So, let's assume now, for argument purpose, that it is the spring of 1989 and you are President Dukakis, and you discover that all of those economists were right and you were wrong. You are now facing that dreaded last resort increase taxes. Which tax do you decide is the least onerous?

- Mr. Vice President, you have flatly ruled out any change in Social Security benefits, even for the wealthy. Now, can you stand here tonight and look at a whole generation of 18 to 34 year olds in the eye the very people who are going to have to be financing that retirement and tell them that they should be financing the retirement of people like yourself, like Governor Dukakis, or for that matter, people such as ourselves here on this panel?
- Mr. Vice President, there are three Justices on the Supreme Court who are in their 80's and it's very likely that the next President will get a chance to put a lasting mark on the Supreme Court. For the record, would your nominees to the Supreme Court have to pass something that has been called a kind of conservative ideological litmus test and would you give us an idea of perhaps who two or three people on your short list are for the Court.
- Governor, millions of Americans are entitled to some of the protections and benefits that the Federal Government provides, including Social Security, pensions, Medicare for the elderly, Medicaid for the poor. But in fact, there are so many millions of Americans who are eligible the government just can't continue to pay for all of those programs as they're currently constituted. A blue ribbon panel shortly after the election is likely to recommend that you go where the money is when you make budget cuts, and that means entitlements. Before the election would you commit yourself to any of those hard choices, such as which one of those entitlements have to be redrawn?
- Governor, I'm going to pass on the question I originally planned to ask you, to follow up on your rebuttal to a question Andrea asked, and that involves Social Security. Now it is true, as you said, that originally you sought an exemption for Social Security COLAs in this national governors' association vote. But when you lost that vote, you then endorsed the overall freeze proposal. And what's more, you had great criticism of your fellow governors who wouldn't go along as political cowards. My question is: Aren't you demagoguing the Social Security issue?
- Mr. Vice President, I'd like to cover a subject that wasn't covered in the first debate. You have said in this campaign, I am an environmentalist, and described yourself as having zero tolerance for polluters. And yet your record does seem to suggest otherwise. When you were head of the President's task force on regulatory relief, you did urge EPA to relax regulations involving the elimination of lead from gasoline. I believe you urged suspension of rules requiring industries to treat toxic waste before discharging them in sewers. And your group also urged OSHA to weaken the regulations requiring that workers be informed of dangerous chemicals at the work site. Finally, I believe you did support the President's veto of the Clean Water Act. My question is, aren't you-- how do you square your campaign rhetoric with this record?
- Mr. Vice President, Jimmy Carter has called this the worst campaign ever. Richard Nixon has called it trivial, superficial and inane. Whoever started down this road first, of negative campaigning, the American people, from all reports coming to us, are completely fed up. Now, do you have any

solutions to suggest? Is there time left to fix it? There are 26 days left. For instance, would you agree to another debate, before it's all over, so that the American people would have another chance before election day to compare you two?

- We are talking about issues, so let's return to something you said earlier about the modernization of land-based missiles. You said that you didn't rule it out that there are limits to what we can spend, and then you went on to talk about a much more expensive part of our defense strategy, namely, conventional forces. Do you somehow see conventional forces as a substitute for our strategic forces, and in not talking about the land-based missiles and not committing to modernizing, do you somehow believe that we can have a survivable nuclear force based on the air and sea legs of our triad?
- Governor, nuclear weapons need nuclear material replenished on a regular basis, and just this week yet another nuclear manufacturing plant was closed because of safety concerns. Some in the Pentagon fear that too much priority has been put on new weapons programs, not enough on current programs, and worry that the resulting shortage would be amounting to nothing less than unilateral nuclear disarmament. Is that a priority that you feel has been ignored by this administration, or are the Pentagon officials making too much of it?
- Mr. Vice President, as many as 100 officials in this Administration have left the government under an ethical cloud. Some have been indicted, some convicted. Many of the cases have involved undue influence once they're outside of government. If you become president, will you lock that revolving door that has allowed some men and women in the government to come back and lobby the very departments they once managed?

October 5, 1988

The Bentsen-Quayle Vice Presidential Debate

- Senator, you have been criticized, as we all know, for your decision to stay out of the Vietnam War, for your poor academic record. But more troubling to some are some of the comments that have been made by people in your own party. Just last week former Secretary of State Haig said that your pick was the dumbest call George Bush could have made. Your leader in the Senate, Bob Dole said that a better qualified person could have been chosen. Other Republicans have been far more critical in private. Why do you think that you have not made a more substantial impression on some of these people who have been able to observe you up close?
- Senator Bentsen - I'm going to interrupt at this point and ask once again that the audience please keep your responses as quiet as possible. We know that many of you here are for one candidate or another. But you are simply taking time away from your candidate, and more likely than not, you'll be causing the partisans for the other candidate to react again when their candidate speaks. So please. Senator Bentsen, you have one minute to respond.
- Senator Bentsen, a question for you, and you also have two minutes to respond. What bothers people is not so much your qualifications but your split on policy with Gov. Dukakis. He has said

that he does not want a clone of himself, but you disagree with him on some major issues: aid to the Nicaraguan Contras; the death penalty; gun control; among others. If you had to step into the presidency, whose agenda would you pursue, yours or his?

- Senator Bentsen, you have claimed that Vice President Bush and the Republicans will raid the Social Security Trust Fund, and you have vowed to protect it. But as Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, you must know that there is something to the argument of your fellow Democrat Bob Strauss that some restraint on Social Security growth may be needed, or at least some decision to tax most Social Security benefits as regular income. In fact, you once voted for and spoke for a six-month delay on cost of living adjustment increases for Social Security. Senator, aren't you and Gov. Dukakis using this issue politically, rather than dealing with it responsibly?
- Senator, since coming to the Senate you have voted against environmental protection legislation about two-thirds of the time. This includes votes against pesticide controls, the toxic waste superfund, and health and safety protection from nuclear wastes. Senator, do you consider yourself an environmentalist, and, if you do, how do you reconcile that with your voting record?
- Thank you, Judy. Senator Quayle, there's been a lot of talk during the course of this campaign about family. It was a principal theme, as I recall, in your acceptance speech in New Orleans. Tonight I'd like to ask you about the sixty-five million American children who live with their families in poverty. I'd like for you to describe to the audience the last time that you may have visited with one of those families personally and how you explain to that family your votes against the school breakfast program, the school lunch program, and the expansion of the child immunization program. (Applause)
- Senator Bentsen, I'd like to take you back to the question that Judy asked you about your differences with Michael Dukakis on contra aid. After all, the contra aid is one of the cutting issues of foreign policy of this country in the last eight years. You and Michael Dukakis seem to be diametrically opposed on that. I have been told that in a closed session of the U.S. Senate you made one of the most eloquent and statesmanlike speeches in behalf of contra aid that anyone had made in the eight years of the Reagan term, that in fact you alluded to the threat that the Sandinista regime could pose to your own state of Texas. Governor Dukakis, on the other hand, has described the contra aid policy as immoral and illegal. Is he wrong? (Scattered applause)
- Good evening, Senator Bentsen, Senator Quayle. I'm sort of the cleanup man in this order, and I've been asked by my colleagues to try to deal with anything that's been left on base. Senator, I have a follow up question for you, Senator Quayle. But Senator Bentsen, I first want to ask you a question about PAC money, a thing I'm sure you're prepared to talk about. Gov. Dukakis has tried to make ethics a major issue in the campaign. And he has you as a running mate, a man who leads the league at last count in the receipt of PAC money, that being the money raised by the special interest organizations. That is a kind of campaign financing which Gov. Dukakis finds so distasteful that he has refused to accept any of it. Do you find that embarrassing, Senator?
- Senator, I want to take you back if I can to the question Judy asked you about some of the apprehensions people may feel about your being a heart-beat away from the presidency. And let us

assume if we can for the sake of this question that you have become Vice President and the President is incapacitated for one reason or another, and you have to take the reins of power. When that moment came, what would be the first steps that you'd take, and why?

- Senator Quayle, in recent years the Reagan administration has scaled back the activities of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, prompted in part by Vice President Bush's Task Force on Regulatory Relief. The budget for the agency has been cut by 20 percent and the number of inspections and manufacturing plants has been reduced by 33 percent. This has had a special effect in this area where many people work in the meat packing industry, which has a far higher rate of serious injuries than almost any other injury, a rate which appears to have been rising, although we're not really sure, because some of the largest companies have allegedly falsifying their reports. Would you acknowledge to the hundreds of injured and maimed people Nebraska, Iowa and elsewhere in the Midwest that in this case deregulation may have gone too far and the government should reassert itself in protecting workers' rights.
- Senator Bentsen, since you have been in the Senate, the government has spent increasing amounts of money in an effort to protect the family farmer. Though most of the subsidies seem to go - do go to the largest and richest farmers who presumably need it least, while it's the smaller farmers who are often forced to sell out, sometimes to their large farmer neighbor who's gotten more subsidies to begin with. Despite the fact that I believe you, sir, are a rather large farmer, yourself, do you believe that it's time to uncouple the subsidy formula from the amount of land the farmer has and target Federal money to the small and medium size farmer?
- Senator Bentsen, you were a businessman before you entered the U.S. Senate. Let me offer you an inventory if I may: Lower interest rates, lower unemployment, lower inflation and an arms control deal with the Soviet Union. Now two guys come through your door at your business and say, "We'd like you to change," without offering a lot of specifics. Why would you accept their deal?
- Senator Quayle, as you mentioned here tonight, you actively supported the invasion of Grenada, which was a military operation to rescue some American medical students and to rescue an island from a Marxist takeover. If military force was necessary in that endeavor, why not use the military to go after the South American drug cartels and after General Noriega, for that matter, in a surgical strike, since drugs in the minds of most Americans pose a far greater danger to many more people? (Scattered applause)
- Senator, I want to take you back to the question that I asked you earlier about what would happen if you were to take over in an emergency, and what you would do first and why. You said you would say a prayer, and you said something about a meeting. What would you do next? (Laughter)
- Senator, I want to take you back if I can to the celebrated Breakfast Club, when it was first revealed that you had a plan to have people pay \$10,000 a plate to have breakfast with you. You handled it with disarming, not to say charming, candor, you said it was a mistake, and you disbanded it and called the whole idea off. And you were widely praised for having handled it deftly. The question I have is: If the Washington Post had not broken that story and other media picked up on it, what

can you tell us tonight as to why we should not believe that you would still be having those breakfasts to this day? (Scattered laughter)

- Senator, we've all just finished - most America has just finished one of the hottest summers it can remember. And apparently this year will be the fifth out of the last nine that are among the hottest on record. No one knows, but most scientists think, that something we're doing, human beings are doing, are exacerbating this problem, and that this could, in a couple of generations, threaten our descendants comfort and health and perhaps even their existence. As Vice President what would you urge our government to do to deal with this problem? And specifically as a Texan, could you support a substantial reduction in the use of fossil fuels which might be necessary down the road?
- Senator, as Vice President your most important contribution would be the advice you gave the President. One of the most troubling facts that's going to face the new Administration is the fact that the United States has now become the world's largest debtor nation. In 1987 foreigners underwrote our debts to the tune of about \$138 billion. Last week a top official of the Japanese Economic Planning Agency bragged that Japan now is in a position to influence the value of the dollar, of our interest rates, and even our stock prices. And he warned that one day maybe they'd do just that. If you were Vice President of the United States and Japan did that, what would you tell the President to do?
- Senator Quayle, I don't mean to beat this drum until it has no more sound in it. But to follow up on Brit Hume's question, when you said that it was a hypothetical situation, it is, sir, after all, the reason that we're here tonight, because you are running not just for Vice President - (Applause)
- And if you cite the experience that you had in Congress, surely you must have some plan in mind about what you would do if it fell to you to become President of the United States, as it has to so many Vice Presidents just in the last 25 years or so. Since you seem to be taking no hostages on the stage, let me ask you a question - (Laughter) - about the American hostages, nine, still in brutal captivity in the Middle East. Senator Bentsen, you have been critical of the Iran-contra affair, but tell me, does the Dukakis-Bentsen ticket have any realistic plan for getting the American hostages being held in the Middle East released in any due time?
- Senator, I want to ask you a question that may be a little off the subject of politics, but which is aimed to get more at the question of what sort of person you are. I would hope that, Senator Bentsen, if you choose to, you might choose to answer the same question in your rebuttal time. Senator, can you identify any work of literature or art or even of film that you have seen or read or experienced in any way in the last two years that has had a particularly strong effect on you, and tell us why.
- Senator Quayle, I want to go back to the matter of qualifications, which I think for most people is more than just your how long you've been in the Senate and how long you've been in public life. There's also a question of candor and of consistency. And several of the things you've said, both here and earlier, I think have raised some reasonable questions. Each of them alone might seem rather trivial, but I think together they create a pattern that needs to be asked. You've talked a few times today about the Job Training Partnership Act, which you authored. In fact, I believe you co-

authored it with another Senator, whom you almost never name. Earlier in the campaign when you were asked why you got a very - a desk job in the National Guard after being trained as a welder, you said at the time you had a very strong background in journalism, which at that time was summer jobs at your family-owned newspaper, which you have not been very forthcoming about what they were. As you have not been very forthcoming about your college record. Now, I have to say - at least the males on this panel have earlier agreed that your record was probably comparable to ours, but - [Laughter.] Nonetheless, these examples of sort of overstatement and exaggeration and not being forthcoming - this what has led a lot of people to question this part of your qualifications, not your experience, but your character. Would you like to set some of these things straight now as to what you did in your summer jobs in college, what your grades were like and would you like to identify your co-sponsor of the Job Training Partnership Act?

- Senator, you're Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and you're generally considered rather an orthodox conservative on fiscal matters, meaning someone who would be very concerned about the budget deficit. With everybody in politics afraid even to mention taxes, more social security cuts or even very much restrain in defense spending, would you now list a few specific programs which would reduce or eliminate - which you would reduce or eliminate, to cut the deficit by about \$50 billion, the deficit which is expected to be about \$135 billion this Fiscal Year.
- Senator Bentsen, I'd like to ask you about your split personality during this election year. You're running on the ticket with Michael Dukakis, a man who is opposed to the death penalty, a man who is in favor of gun control, and at the same time you're running for the United States Senate in the state of Texas, where your position on many of those same issues is well known, and absolutely opposed to him. How do you explain to the people of Texas how you can be a social conservative on those cutting issues and still run with Michael Dukakis on the national ticket?
- Senator Quayle, all of us in our lifetime encounter an experience that helps shapes our adult philosophy in some form or another. Could you describe for this audience tonight what experience you may have had, and how it shaped our political philosophy?

1992 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:

October 11, 1992

The First Clinton-Bush-Perot Presidential Debate

- The first topic tonight is what separates each of you from the other. Mr. Perot, what do you believe tonight is the single most important separating issue of this campaign?
- Governor Clinton, how do you respond to the President on the -- you have two minutes -- on the question of experience? He says that is what distinguishes him from the other two of you.
- President Bush, the question goes to you. you have two minutes. And the question is this: Are there important issues of character separating you from these other two men?

- Governor Clinton, can you lock in a level here tonight on where middle-income families can be guaranteed a tax cut or, at the very least, at what income level they can be guaranteed no tax increase?
- Mr. President, this past week your secretary of the Army, Michael Stone, said he had no plans to abide by a congressional mandate to cut US forces in Europe from 150 to 100 thousand by the end of September 1996. Now, why, almost 50 years after the end of World War II, and with the total collapse of the Soviet Union, should American taxpayers be taxed to support armies in Europe when the Europeans have plenty of money to do it for themselves?
- Mr. Perot, you talked about fairness just a minute ago and sharing the pain. As part of your plan to reduce the ballooning federal deficit, you've suggested that we raise gasoline taxes 50 cents a gallon over 5 years. Why punish the middle class consumer to such a degree?
- Mr. President, last month you came to St. Louis to announce a very lucrative contract for McDonnell Douglas to build F-15s for Saudi Arabia. In today's Post-Dispatch, a retired saleswoman, a 75-year-old woman named Marjorie Roberts, asked if she could ask a question of the candidates. She said she wanted to register her concern about the lack of a plan to convert our defense-oriented industries into other purposes. How would you answer her?
- Mr. Perot, you talked a minute ago about rebuilding the job base. But is it true what Governor Clinton just said, that that means that unemployment will increase, that it will slow the economy? And how would you specifically use the powers of the presidency to get more people back into good jobs immediately?
- Governor Clinton, when a president running for the first time gets into the office and wants to do something about the economy, he finds in Washington there's a person who has much more power over the economy than he does: the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, accountable to no one. That being the case, would you go along with proposals made by Treasury Secretary James Brady and Congressman Lee Hamilton to make the Federal Reserve Board chairman somehow more accountable to elected officials?
- Mr. Perot, in the postwar Cold War environment, what should be the overriding U.S. national interest? And what can the United States do, and what can it afford to do, to defend the national interest?
- Governor Clinton, you accused the President of coddling tyrants, including those in Beijing. As President, how would you exert U.S. power to influence affairs in China.
- Mr. President, how can you watch the killing in Bosnia and the ethnic cleansing, or the starvation and anarchy in Somalia, and not want to use America's might, if not America's military, to try to end that kind of suffering?

- Governor Clinton, can you tell us what your definition of the word "family" is?
- Mr. President, there's been a lot of talk about Harry Truman in this campaign, so much so that I think tomorrow I'll wake up and see him named as the next commissioner of baseball. The thing that Mr. Truman didn't have to deal with is drugs. Americans are increasingly alarmed about drug-related crimes in cities and suburbs. And your administration is not the first to have grappled with this. And are you at all of a mind that maybe it ought to go to another level, if not to what's advocated by William F. Buckley, Jr. and Milton Friedman, legalization, somewhere between there and where we are now?
- Mr. Perot, racial division continues to tear apart our great cities, the last episode being this spring in Los Angeles. Why is this still happening in America, and what would you do to end it?
- Mr. President, yesterday tens of thousands of people paraded past the White House to demonstrate their concern about the disease AIDS. A celebrated member of your commission, Magic Johnson, quit saying that there was too much inaction. Where is this widespread feeling coming from that your administration is not doing enough about AIDS?
- Mr. Perot, even if you've got what people say are the guts to take on changes in the most popular, the most sacred of the entitlements, Medicare, people say you haven't a prayer of actually getting anything passed in Washington.
- Since a president isn't a lone ranger, how in the world can you make some of those unpopular changes?
- Governor Clinton, Ann Compton has brought up Medicare. I remember in 1965, when Wilbur Mills of Arkansas, the chairman of Ways and Means, was pushing it through the Congress. The charge against it was it's socialized medicine.
- Well, he served with him 2 years later, in 1967, where I first met him. The 2nd point, though, is that it is now skyrocketing out of control. People want it. We say it's going bonkers. Is not the Oregon plan applied to Medicaid rationing the proper way to go even though the federal government last August ruled that it violated the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990?
- And that's exactly what we're going to do. That was, in fact, the final question and answer. We're now going to move to closing statements. Each candidate will have up to 2 minutes. The order, remember, was determined by drawing, and Mr. Perot, you are first.

October 15, 1992

The Second Clinton-Bush-Perot Presidential Debate

- I'd like to direct my question to Mr. Perot. What will you do as president to open foreign markets to fair competition from American business and to stop unfair competition here at home from foreign countries so that we can bring jobs back to the US?
- This is for Governor Clinton. In the real world, that is, outside of Washington, DC, compensation and achievement are based on goals defined and achieved. My question is about the deficit. Would you define in specific dollar goals how much you would reduce the deficit in each of the 4 years of a Clinton administration and then enter into a legally binding contract with the American people, that if you did not achieve those goals that you would not seek a 2nd term? Answer yes or no and then comment on your answer, please.
- Yes, I'd like to address all the candidates with this question. The amount of time the candidates have spent in this campaign trashing their opponents' character and their programs is depressingly large. Why can't your discussions and proposals reflect the genuine complexity and the difficulty of the issues to try to build a consensus around the best aspects of all proposals?
- Thank you, Mr. Perot. So that seems directed; he would say it's you gentlemen that have been doing that. Mr. Clinton, Governor Clinton -- oh, President Bush, how would you like to respond?
- May I -- I talked to this audience before you gentlemen came and I asked them about how they felt about the tenor of the campaign. Would you like to let them know what you thought about that, when I said are you pleased with how the campaign's been going? (Audience: "No.")
- The focus of my work as a domestic mediator is meeting the needs of the children that I work with, by way of their parents, and not the wants of their parents. And I ask the three of you, how can we, as symbolically the children of the future president, expect the two of you, the three of you to meet our needs, the needs in housing and in crime and you name it, as opposed to the wants of your political spin doctors and your political parties? Can we focus on the issues and not the personalities and the mud? I think there's a need, if we could take a poll here with the folks from Gallup perhaps, I think there's a real need here to focus at this point on the needs.
- Yes. I would like to get a response from all three gentlemen. And the question is, what are your plans to improve the physical infrastructure of this nation, which includes the water system, the sewer system, our transportation systems, etcetera. Thank you.
- The cities. Who's going to fix the cities and how?
- Mr. President, aren't you threatening to veto the bill -- the urban aid bill -- that included enterprise zones?

- Mr. Perot, what about your plans for the cities? You want to tackle the economy and the deficit first.
- Mr. Perot, everybody thought you won the first debate because you were plain-speaking and you made it sound, oh, so simple. Well, just do it. What makes you think that you're going to be able to get the Democrats and Republicans together any better than these guys?
- No, I want you to tell me how you're going to be able to get the Republicans and Democrats in Congress to work together better than these two gentlemen.
- My question was originally for Governor Clinton, but I think I would welcome a response from all three candidates. As you are aware, crime is rampant in our cities. And in the Richmond area -- and I'm sure it's happened elsewhere -- 12-year-olds are carrying guns to school. And I'm sure when our Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution they did not mean for the right to bear arms to apply to 12-year-olds. So I'm asking: Where do you stand on gun control, and what do you plan to do about it?
- The fact that homicide is the leading cause of death among young black males 15 to 24 years old. What are you going to do to get the guns off the street?
- Please state your position on term limits, and, if you are in favor of them, how will you get them enacted?
- I'd like to ask Governor Clinton, do you attribute the rising costs of health care to the medical profession itself, or do you think the problem lies elsewhere? And what specific proposals do you have to tackle this problem?
- Yes. How has the national debt personally affected each of your lives? And if it hasn't, how can you honestly find a cure for the economic problems of the common people if you have no experience in what's ailing them?
- I know people who cannot afford to pay the mortgage on their homes, their car payment. I have personal problems with the national debt. But how has it affected you and if you have no experience in it, how can you help us, if you don't know what we're feeling?
- I think she means more the recession -- the economic problems today the country faces rather than the deficit.
- Yes, I do. My name is Ben Smith. I work in the financial field, counseling retirees, and I'm personally concerned about three major areas. One is the Social Security Administration or trust fund is projected to be insolvent by the year 2036. And we funded the trust fund with IOUs in the form of

Treasury bonds. The Pension Guarantee Fund, which backs up our private retirement plans for retirees, is projected to be bankrupt by the year 2026, not to mention the cutbacks by private companies. And Medicare is projected to be bankrupt maybe as soon as 1997. And I would like from each of you a specific response as to what you intend to do for retirees relative to these issues, not generalities but specifics because I think they're very disturbing issues.

- We've come to a position where we're in the new world order, and I'd like to know what the candidates feel our position is in this new world order, and what our responsibilities are as a superpower?
- Governor Clinton, the president mentioned Saddam Hussein. Your vice president and you have had some words about the president and Saddam Hussein. Would you care to comment?
- Yes. We've talked a lot tonight about creating jobs. But we have an awful lot of high school graduates who don't know how to read a ruler, who cannot fill out an application for a job. How can we create high paying jobs with the education system we have and what would you do to change it?
- The question is, what is it going to cost? What is it going to cost?
- We have very little time left and it occurs to me that we have talked all this time and there has not been one question about some of the racial tensions and ethnic tensions in America. Is there anyone in this audience that would like to pose a question to the candidates on this?
- What I'd like to know, and this is to any of the three of you, is aside from the recent accomplishment of your party, aside from those accomplishments in racial representation, and without citing any of your current appointments or successful elections, when do you estimate your party will both nominate and elect an Afro-American and female ticket to the presidency of the U.S.?

October 19, 1992

The Third Clinton-Bush-Perot Presidential Debate

- It seems, from what some of those voters said at your Richmond debate, and from polling and other data, that each of you, fairly or not, faces serious voter concerns about the underlying credibility and believability of what each of you says you would do as president in the next 4 years. Governor Clinton, in accordance with the draw, those concerns about you are first: you are promising to create jobs, reduce the deficit, reform the health care system, rebuild the infrastructure, guarantee college education for everyone who is qualified, among many other things, all with financial pain only for the very rich. Some people are having trouble apparently believing that is possible. Should they have that concern?
- Governor, the word "pain" -- one of the other leadership things that's put on you is that you don't speak of pain, that you speak of all things -- nobody's going to really have to suffer under your plan. You've heard what Mr. Perot has said. He's said it's got -- to do the things that you want to do, you

can't do it by just taking the money from the rich. That's what the president says as well. How do you respond to that? They said the numbers don't add up.

- As a practical matter, Mr. President, do you agree with the governor when he says that the middle class, the taxes on the middle class -- do your numbers agree that the taxes on the middle class have gone up during the last --
- Mr. President, when you said just then that you admit your mistakes and you looked at Governor Clinton and said -- what mistake is it that you want him to admit to?
- Mr. Perot, if you were sitting at home now and just heard this exchange about Arkansas, who would you believe?
- Why is that a mistake?
- What he did as governor of Arkansas is irrelevant?
- Mr. President, let's move to some of the leadership concerns that have been voiced about you. And they relate to something you said in your closing statement in Richmond the other night about the president being the manager of crises. And that relates to an earlier criticism, that you began to focus on the economy, on health care, on racial divisions in this country, only after they became crises. Is that a fair criticism?
- Well, it's just that -- you've spoken to it. I mean, but the idea, not so much in specifics, but that it has to be a crisis before it gets your attention. Well, then, let's phrase -- I'll phrase it differently, then. He said the other night in his closing words in Richmond that one of the key things that he believes the American people should decide between -- among the 3 of you is who they want in charge if this country gets to a crisis. Now, that's what he said, and the rap on the president is that it's only crisis time that he focuses on some of these things. So my question to you -- we're going to talk about you in a minute -- But my question to you is, so -- if you have nothing to say about it, fine, I'll go to Governor Clinton, but --I have to -- we have to talk about Ross Perot now or he'll get me, I'm sure. Mr. Perot, on this issue that I have raised at the very beginning and we've been talking about, which is leadership, as president of the US, it concerns -- my reading of it, at least, my concerns about you, as expressed by folks in the polls and other places, it goes like this. You had a problem with General Motors. You took your \$750 million and you left. You had a problem in the spring and summer about some personal hits that you took as a potential candidate for president of the US and you walked out. Does that say anything relevant to how you would function as president of the US?
- Governor, do you have a response to the staying- the-course question about Mr. Perot?
- Governor, what about that charge? Do you want it both ways on this issue?

- Mr. Perot, based on your experience at General Motors, where do you come down on this? This has been thrown about, back and forth, during this campaign from the very beginning about jobs and CAFE standards.
- Just for the record, though, Mr. Perot, I take it, then, from your answer, you do not have a position on whether or not enforcing the CAFE standards will cost jobs in the auto industry?
- So that means -- in other words, you agree with President Bush; is that right?
- Mr. President, how do you respond to that? Mr. Perot's made that charge several times. The fact that you have people working in your campaign who are paid foreign lobbyists.
- Governor Clinton, your credibility has come into question because of your different responses on the Vietnam draft. If you had it to do over again, would you put on the nation's uniform, and if elected, could you in good conscience send someone to war?
- Mr. President, you keep saying that you made a mistake in agreeing to a tax increase to get the 1990 budget deal with Congress. But if you hadn't gotten that deal, you would have either had to get repeal of the Gramm-Rudman Deficit Control Act or cut defense spending drastically at a time when the country was building up for the gulf war, and decimate domestic discretionary spending, including such things as air traffic control. If you had it to do all over again, sir, which of those alternatives would you choose?
- Mr. Perot, you've talked about going to Washington to do what the people who run this country want you to do. But it is the president's duty to lead, and often lead alone. How can you lead if you are forever seeking consensus before you act?
- President Bush, gentlemen, I acknowledge that all of you have women and ethnic minorities working for you and working with you. But when we look at the circle of the key people closest to you, your inner circle of advisers, we see white men only. Why? And when will that change?
- Mr. Perot, what proof do you have that Saddam Hussein was told that he could have the -- do you have any actual proof or are you asking for the papers? And also, I really came in with another question. What is this penchant you have to investigate everyone? Are those accusations correct -- investigating your staff, investigating the leaders of the grassroots movement, investigating associates of your family?
- Governor, an important aspect of leadership is, of course, anticipating problems. During the 1988 campaign there was little or no mention of the savings and loan crisis that has cost the American people billions and billions of dollars. Now there are rumblings that a commercial bank crisis is on the horizon. Is there such a problem, sir? If so, how bad is it and what will it cost to clean it up?

- Mr. Perot, aside from the deficit, what government policy or policies do you really want to do something about? What really sticks in your craw about conditions in this country -- beside the deficit -- that you would want to fix as president?
- Governor Clinton, you said that you will raise taxes on the rich, people with incomes of \$200,000 a year or higher. A lot of people are saying that you will have to go lower than that, much lower. Will you make a pledge tonight below which, an income level that you will not go below? I'm looking for numbers, sir, not just a concept.
- Mr. President, why have you dropped so dramatically in the leadership polls, from the high 80s to the 40s? And you have said that you will do anything you have to do to get reelected. What can you do in 2 weeks to win reelection?

October 13, 1992

The Gore-Quayle-Stockdale Vice Presidential Debate

- What role would each of you like to play as vice president, what areas interest you, and what are your qualifications to serve as president, if necessary? In the case of Vice President Quayle, who we're starting with, I suppose you'd tell us the role that you did play in the first term and which you'd like to do in a 2nd term. Go ahead, sir.
- Let's move on to the economy. Specifically the economy was talked about at great length the other night in the presidential debate. Let's talk about a very particular aspect of the economy and that is, getting people back to work. For the average person, the great fear is losing his or her job and many Americans have lost jobs in this recession, which also means the loss of benefits, the loss of a home, the destruction of a family's security. Specifically, how would your administration go about getting people back to work and how long is it going to take? And we start with Admiral Stockdale.
- Okay. I think it's time to move on to our next topic. All 3 of you gentlemen have some expertise in defense and the armed forces. Vice President Quayle and Senator Gore both served on the Senate Armed Services Committee. Admiral Stockdale, of course, has a very distinguished military career. With the end of the Cold War, everyone agrees that there are going to be major cuts. They've already started in the defense budget. But this country has a long history of neglecting its military needs in peace time and then paying for it with heavy casualties when we're caught unprepared. How much of a defense cut is safe? What happens to the people who are forced to leave the military services, or if they lose their jobs because they're working in defense industries.
- Okay, I'm not pointing any fingers. Let's talk about the environment -- we'll get away from controversy. Everyone wants a safe and clean environment, but there's an ongoing conflict between environmental protection and the need for economic growth and jobs. So the point I throw out on the table is, how do you resolve this conflict between protection of the environment and growth in jobs, and why has it taken so long to deal with basic problems, such as toxic waste dumps, clean air and clean water?

- Let's go on to health care. Health care protection has become a necessity of life in our society, yet millions of Americans are not ensured and the cost of medical treatment is practically out of control. How do you propose to control these costs and how are you going to provide access to health care for every American?
- Coming out of health care, again trying to avoid controversy, let's talk about the abortion debate. Abortion rights has been a bitter controversy in this country for almost 20 years. It's been heightened by the recent Supreme Court decisions. So I'll make it very simple in this question: Where do each of you stand on the issue? What actions will your president's administration take on the abortion question? Will it be a factor in the appointment of federal judges, especially to the Supreme Court? And I believe that Senator Gore goes first.
- Does anybody have any view about the appointment of judges on this?
- Let's not -- we're not horse trading. We're having a debate. Let's go on. Let's talk about the cities. Because that's where a majority of Americans live, in urban areas, and they're facing a financial and social crisis. They've lost sources of tax revenue. The aid that once came from the federal and state governments has been drastically cut. There's an epidemic of drugs, crime and violence. Their streets, their schools are like war zones. It's becoming increasingly difficult to pay for public education, for transportation, for police and fire protection, the basic services that local government must provide. Now, everybody says, talks about enterprise zones, that may be part of the solution, but what else are your administrations really going to be willing to do to help the cities?
- We have to go on. What I'm about to say doesn't apply to the debate tonight; it applies to the campaign that's been going on outside this auditorium. With 3 weeks to go, this campaign has at times been very ugly, with the tone being set by personal negative attacks. As candidates, how does it look from your viewpoint? And are these tactics really necessary? Admiral Stockdale -- it's your turn to go first.
- I'm sorry, sir. I was saying that at times this campaign has been very ugly with personal negative attacks. As a candidate, how does it look from where you are and are these tactics really necessary?

1996 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:
October 6, 1996

The First Clinton-Dole Presidential Debate

- Mr. President, first question. There is a major difference in your view of the role of the Federal government and that of Senator Dole. How would you define the difference?
- Senator Dole, the President said in his opening statement we are better off today than we were four years ago. Do you agree?

- Mr. President, Senator Dole has come pretty close in the last few days to accusing you of lying about his position on Medicare reform. Have you done so?
- Senator Dole, speaking of your tax plan, do you still think that's a good idea, the 15 percent across the board tax cut?
- Mr. President, the Senator mentioned trial lawyers and campaign, that means campaign financing. How do you personally avoid being unduly influenced by people who give you money or give you services in your campaigns?
- Well, Senator Dole, let me ask you the same question I asked the President: How do you avoid being influenced by people who contribute money and services to your campaigns?
- Mr. President, the Senator mentioned drugs. He suggested that you are -- you bear some responsibility for the rise in drug use of teenagers in the United States. Is he right?
- Senator Dole, on the government, continuing to talk about the government's role. If elected President, would you seek to repeal the Brady Bill and the ban on assault weapons?
- Mr. President, Senator Dole said the other day that you practiced a photo-op foreign policy that has lessened the credibility of the United States throughout the world. Is he wrong about that?
- Senator Dole, if elected president, what criteria would you use to decide when to send U.S. troops into harm's way.
- Mr. President, what is your attitude toward Cuba and how Cuba should be treated?
- Senator Dole, you mentioned health reform several times. What do you think should be done about the healthcare system?
- Back to foreign affairs for a moment, Mr. President. Are you satisfied with the way you handled this last Iraq crisis and the end result?
- Senator Dole, on your photo-op foreign policy charge against the President -- I mean your charge against the President, that he has a photo-op foreign policy. Does the Middle East summit last week fall into that category?
- Mr. President, in your acceptance speech in Chicago, you said the real choice in this race is, quote, whether we build a bridge to the future or a bridge to the past; about whether we believe our best days are still out there or our best days are behind us; about whether we want a country of people all working together or one where you're on your own, end quote. Are you saying that you believe Senator Dole is a man of the past and if elected president he would lead the country backward?

- Senator Dole, do you still favor eliminating the Department of Education.
- Mr. President, what is wrong with the school choice proposal?
- Senator Dole, at the Republican convention you said the following and I quote, it is demeaning to the nation that within the Clinton Administration a core of the elite who never grew up, never did anything real, never sacrificed, never suffered, and never learned should have the power to fund with your earnings their dubious and self-serving schemes, end quote. Whom precisely and what precisely did you have in mind?
- Mr. President, if you're not a liberal, describe your political philosophy.
- Senator Dole, we've talked mostly now about differences between the two of you that relate to policy issues and that sort of thing. Are there also significant differences in the more personal area that are relevant to this election?
- Senator Dole, if you could single out one thing that you would like for the voters to have in their mind about President Clinton on a policy matter or a personal matter, what would it be? Something to know about him, understand it and appreciate it.
- Mr. President, what do you say to Senator Dole's point that this election is about keeping one's word?

October 16, 1996

The Second Clinton-Dole Presidential Debate

- My name is Shannon McAfee. I'm a beginning educator in this country, and I really think it's important what children have to say. They're still very idealistic. And they -- everything they say comes from the heart. I have a quote for you from "If I Were President," compiled by Peggy Gavin. A sixth grader says, "If I were president, I would think about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington and what they did to make our country great. We should unite the white and black people and people of all cultures. Democrats and Republicans should unite also. We should all come together and think of the best ways to solve the economic problems of our country. "I believe that when we are able to come together and stop fighting amongst ourselves we will get along a lot better." These are the ideals and morals that we are teach -- we are trying to teach our children in these days. Yet we don't seem to be practicing them in our government, in anything. If you are president, how will you begin to practice what we are preaching to our children, the future of our nation?
- Dr. Robert N. Berkley. I'm a cardiologist from Fallbrook, California. Mr. President, I would like to know if you would please explain your plans for -- in a substantive fashion for addressing the problems with the health care system in our country.

- Senator Dole, my name is Jason Milligan, active duty military and small business owner, and my question is: What is your position on closing the gap between military and civilian pay scales?
- President Clinton, my name is Cecily Kelly. Yesterday, Yassir Arafat said in Palestine that he thinks the key to success in the Middle East is the commitment of Americans. Would you as President send American troops to Israel or the West Bank as peacekeepers?
- Ex-smoker for 30 years. About 30 years ago I was a pack-plus a day man. Okay? You mentioned a statement -- you said some time ago that you didn't think nicotine was addictive. Would you care to -- are you still holding to that statement, or do you wish to recant or explain yourself?
- President Clinton, my name is Jack Fleck. I'm retired Air Force pilot. Sir, it's officially forecast that our annual Medicare and Social Security deficits are measured in the trillions of dollars next century. Depending on who you listen to, Social Security will be bankrupted in either 2025 or 2030. I feel this is grossly unfair, especially to our younger generation who are losing faith in the system. My question is this: Assuming you agree that our entitlement programs are on an unsustainable course, what specific reforms do you propose?
- Senator Dole my name is Susan Gonzalez. And I would like to know what you are -- what would be your first step in reforming welfare?
- Mr. President. My name is Pamela Johnson and I'm a landlord. My question is, does your party have any future plans to reduce the capital gains tax, especially for retired Americans?
- My name is Melissa Naudin. I'm a third-year student at UC, San Diego. I just want to say it's a great honor representing the voices of America. My voice, my question is concerning you, Mr. Dole. All the controversy regarding your age. How do you feel you can respond to young voices of America today and tomorrow?
- Hello. My name is Tressia Sanders. And my question is, do you feel that America has grown enough and has educated itself enough to totally cut out Affirmative Action?
- My name's Tim David. I'm a mechanical engineer. Senator Dole, how do you reduce taxes and balance the budget?
- My name is Duane Burns. I'm a martial arts instructor and a father. Mr. President, could you outline any plans you have to expand the Family Leave Act?
- Hi. My name is Bridget Giannotti, and I'm a wife and mother of two sons, from Carlsbad. And my question to you, Senator Dole, is as the wife of a San Diego business owner, I see one of our biggest problems in the U.S. is it does not manufacture enough of our own products. How would you help this problem out?

- I'm Bob Goldfarb. I'm a travel agent and can you please explain your policy on the Employment Nondiscrimination Act that would have prohibited discrimination, would have prohibited people from being fired from their jobs simply for being gay or lesbian.
- Being in health care -- we have talked about a little bit about health care tonight, but mainly Medi-Cal and Medicare have been mentioned, but the private sector is a problem. Managed care is taking over, especially in California. And because of that, the quality of care is going downhill. There are many, many people who cannot get the tests that they need when they need them, and because of that, they are dying needlessly. There are many, many more lawsuits being presented against the managed care industry because of this. And I think it's a real problem that needs to be addressed. What would you do if you were president?
- I would sort of like -- Colleen O'Connor. I teach history and political science in San Diego Mesa College right up the road here. And I would like to tee off from the original question by another teacher and speak for those people that aren't here tonight. 63 percent of the American people are not participating that are eligible to vote, not even participating in the process. Several parties can't even get in the debate; the Green Party, the Reform Party, the Natural Law Party, all of these people are basically opted out of what we're still participating in. If we in fact are going to bring the country back together and be all faces around the table, the new American family, what do you see as something the president can do to begin that process to bring them back in?
- I'm Iris Siefert and I'm unemployed. Senator Dole, we talked about Social Security for us baby boomers. But shouldn't we be saving and investing for our own retirement as well? Are you planning any incentives to encourage us to take care of ourselves rather than to rely on the government and on Social Security when we retire?
- Good evening. I'm Michael Smith. I'm an electronics technician in the Navy. My question was how you plan to deal with the trade deficit with Japan.
- Rod Kite, minister. This great nation has been established by the founding fathers who possessed a very strong Christian belief in godly principles. If elected president of the United States, what could you do to return this nation to these basic principles? And also, do you feel that the president -- the office of president has the responsibility to set the role example to inspire our young people?
- My name is Yvette Dube and I too am a minister. I'm with the Universal Metropolitan Community Churches. President Clinton, perhaps you can help me with something tonight. I heard Mr. Dole say several times "all of us together," and when he was asked if he would support equal rights and employment for gay and lesbian people, you said that you favored that, and he said that he did not believe in special rights. And I thought the question was equal rights for all people. And I don't understand why people are using the term "special rights" when the question is "equal rights." Could you help me in understanding that?

October 9, 1996

The Gore-Kemp Vice Presidential Debate

- So, we go now to the first question and to Mr. Kemp. Some supporters of Senator Dole have expressed disappointment over his unwillingness in Hartford Sunday night to draw personal and ethical differences between him and President Clinton. How do you feel about it?
- Mr. Vice President, what do you see as the political philosophy differences in a general way between you and President Clinton on the one hand, Mr. Kemp and Senator Dole on the other?
- Mr. Kemp, back to the philosophy question. Do you think there's a basic philosophy difference between these two tickets, or is it about specifics, which both of you have talked about?
- Mr. Vice President, should federal government Affirmative Action programs be continued?
- Mr. Kemp, do we have a serious race problem in the United States right now?
- Mr. Vice President, if re-elected, what would, what could we look forward to in the way of an inner city policy from a Clinton/Gore second term?
- Mr. Kemp, you said recently that one of the problems related to this was that all the capital was in the hands of the white people. What did you mean by that?
- Mr. Vice President, what about Mr. Kemp's point that he's made a couple of times that what we need is to throw away the current -- the present tax code and write a whole new tax system. Do you agree with that?
- Mr. Kemp, is it really possible to balance the budget without reforming drastically the entitlements programs, including Social Security and Medicare?
- Mr. Vice President, Mr. Kemp has accused you of demagoguery.
- Mr. Kemp, what, if anything, would a Dole/Kemp administration do to change the current legal status of abortion in this country?
- Mr. Vice President, is the war in Bosnia really over, or is it going to break out again once the U.S. and the NATO troops leave?
- Mr. Kemp, Senator Dole has criticized the President on Haiti, that he handled that wrong. What did he do wrong?
- Mr. Vice President, Mexico, we caused the problem, then had to go in and bail them out?

- Mr. Kemp, Senator Dole the other night criticized President Clinton for cutting defense spending and, thus, cutting jobs in California. Is that how defense spending should be seen, as a jobs program as well?
- Mr. Vice President, some Democrats have charged that the environment would be in jeopardy if Mr. Kemp and Senator Dole are elected. Do you share that fear?
- Mr. Kemp, you mentioned it already before and you said on "Meet the Press" Sunday that the federal government engages in "regulation reign of terror." What exactly do you mean?
- Mr. Vice President, does the government of the -- of the United States as now operated by the Clinton Administration operate on a reign of terror, through a reign of terror?
- What measurement do you use, Mr. Kemp, in saying the economy is not growing the way it should be?
- Mr Vice President, Senator Dole raised the same question to President Clinton the other night about keeping promises made. What is your reaction to that? What is your response to that charge against you and the President.
- Mr. Kemp, uh some are saying these days that something's gone terribly wrong with the American soul, that we've become too mean, too selfish, too uncaring and the spitting incident, how it was handled, the baseball players used as a recent example. What do you think about that?
- Mr. Kemp, speaking of the family, where do you come down on it? Do you believe it should be repealed? The Family Leave Act?

2000 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:
October 3, 2000

The First Gore-Bush Presidential Debate

- Vice President Gore, you have questioned whether Governor Bush has the experience to be President of the United States. What exactly do you mean?
- So I take it by your answer, then, Mr. Vice President, that in an interview recently with the "New York Times" when you said that you questioned whether or not Governor Bush has experience enough to be president, you were talking about strictly policy differences.
- Let me just follow up one quick question. When you hear Vice President Gore question your experience, do you read it the same way, that he's talking about policy differences only?

- Governor Bush, you have a question. This is a companion question to the question I asked Vice President Gore. You have questioned whether Vice President Gore has demonstrated the leadership qualities necessary to be President of the United States. What do you mean by that?
- Let me ask you both this and we'll move on on the subject. As a practical matter, both of you want to bring prescription drugs to seniors, correct?
- I have an idea. If you have any more to say about this, you can say it in your closing statements and we'll move on, okay? New question. Vice President Gore. How would you contrast your approach to preventing future oil price and supply problems like we have now to the approach of Governor Bush?
- So if somebody is watching tonight and listening to what the two of you just said, is it fair to say, okay, the differences between Governor Bush and Vice President Gore are as follows. You're for doing something on the consumption end and you're for doing something on the production end?
- New question, new subject. Governor Bush. If elected president, would you try to overturn the FDA's approval last week of the abortion pill RU-486?
- Governor, we'll go to the Supreme Court question in a moment, but make sure I understand your position on RU-486. If you're elected president, not through appointments to the FDA, you won't support legislation to overturn this?
- Should a voter assume that all judicial appointments you make to the Supreme Court or any other court, federal court, will also be pro-life?
- What kind of appointments should they expect from you?
- Is the vice president right? Is that a code word for overturning Roe v. Wade?
- Reverse the question. What code phrases should we read by what you said about what kind of people you would appoint?
- New subject, new question. Vice President Gore, if President Milosevic of Yugoslavia refuses to accept the election results and leave office, what action, if any, should the United States take to get him out of there?
- What if he doesn't leave? What if all the diplomatic efforts, all the pressure from all over the world and he still doesn't go? Is this the kind of thing, to be specific, that you as president would consider the use of U.S. military force to get him gone?
- You wouldn't use force?

- New question. How would you go about as president deciding when it was in the national interest to use U.S. force, generally?
- Vice President Gore, how should the voters go about deciding which one of you is better suited to make the kinds of decisions, whether it's Milosevic or whatever, in the military and foreign policy area?
- Governor, how would you advise the voters to make the decision on this issue?
- New subject. New question. Should the voters of this election, Vice President Gore, see this in the domestic area as a major choice between competing political philosophies?
- Having cleared that up, we're going to a new question. Education. Governor Bush. Both of you have promised dramatically to change -- to change dramatically public education in this country. Of the public money spent on education, only 6% of that is federal money. You want to change 100% of the public education with 6% of the money, is that possible?
- All right. So having heard the two of you, the voters have just heard the two of you, what is the difference? What is the choice between the two of you on education?
- New question. We've been talking about a lot of specific issues. It's often said that in the final analysis about 90% of being the President of the United States is dealing with the unexpected, not with issues that came up in the campaign. Vice President Gore, can you point to a decision, an action you have taken, that illustrates your ability to handle the unexpected, the crisis under fire?
- New question. There can be all kinds of crises, Governor. A question for you. There could be a crisis, for instance, in the financial area, the stock market could take a tumble, there could be a failure of a major financial institution. What is your general attitude toward government intervention in such events?
- So, Governor, would you agree there is no basic difference here on intervening -- on federal government intervening in what might be seen by others to be a private financial crisis?
- I thought we cleared this up a while ago. New question on Social Security. Both of you have Social Security reform plans, so we could spend the rest of the evening and two or three other evenings talking about them in detail. We won't do that. But -- Many experts, including Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan, Vice President Gore, say that it will be impossible for either of you, essentially, to keep the system viable on its own during the coming baby boomer retirement onslaught without either reducing benefits or increasing taxes. You disagree?
- New question. Are there issues of character that distinguish you from Vice President Gore?

- So, Governor, what are you saying when you mention the fundraising scandals or the fundraising charges that involve Vice President Gore? What are you saying that the voters should take from that that's relevant to this election?
- Are you saying all this is irrelevant, Vice President Gore?
- Senator McCain -- hold on one second. Senator McCain said in August, "It doesn't matter which one of you is President of the United States in January, there is going to be blood on the floor of the United States Senate," and he'll tie up the Senate until campaign finance reform is passed that includes a ban on soft money. First of all, would you support that effort by him, or would you sign a bill that is finally passed that included –

October 11, 2000

The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate

- One of you is about to be elected the leader of the single-most powerful nation in the world, economically, financially, militarily, diplomatically, you name it. Have you formed any guiding principles for exercising this enormous power?
- Should the people of the world look at the United States, Governor, and say, should they fear us, should they welcome our involvement, should they see us as a friend, everybody in the world? How would you project us around the world, as president?
- Does that give us -- does our wealth, our good economy, our power, bring with it special obligations to the rest of the world?
- Let's go through some of the specifics now. New question. Vice President Gore, the governor mentioned the Middle East. Here we're talking at this stage in the game about diplomatic power that we have. What do you think the United States should do right now to resolve that conflict over there?
- So you don't believe, Vice President Gore that we should take sides and resolve this right now? A lot of people pushing hey, the United States should declare itself and not be so neutral in this particular situation.
- People watching here tonight are very interested in Middle East policy, and they are so interested they want to base their vote on differences between the two of you as president how you would handle Middle East policy. Is there any difference?
- Saddam Hussein, you mean, get him out of there?
- You feel that is a failure of the Clinton administration?
- Did he state your position correctly, you're not calling for eliminating the sanctions, are you?

- Let's go on to Milosevic and Yugoslavia, and it falls under the area of our military power.
- Governor, new question. Should the fall of Milosevic be seen as a triumph for U.S. military intervention?
- But you think it would not have happened -- do you think that Milosevic would not have fallen if the United States and NATO had not intervened militarily? Is this a legitimate use of our military power?
- Well, let's stay on the subject for a moment. New question related to this. I figured this out; in the last 20 years there have been eight major actions that involved the introduction of U.S. ground, air or naval forces. Let me name them. Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo. If you had been president for any of those interventions, would any of those interventions not have happened?
- But the reverse side of the question, Governor, that Vice President Gore mentioned, 600,000 people died in Rwanda in 1994. There was no U.S. intervention, no intervention from the outside world. Was that a mistake not to intervene?
- Do you have any second thoughts on that, based on what you said a moment ago about genocide?
- So what would you say, Governor, that somebody would say: "Hey wait a minute, why not Africa, I mean why the Middle East, why the Balkans, but not Africa, when 600,000 people's lives are at risk"?
- Vice President Gore, do you agree with the governor's views on nation building, the use of military, our military, for nation building as he described and defined it?
- You said in the Boston debate, Governor, on this issue of nation building, that the United States military is overextended now. Where is it overextended? Where are there U.S. military that you would bring home if you become president?
- The use of the military, there -- some people are now suggesting that if you don't want to use the military to maintain the peace, to do the civil thing, is it time to consider a civil force of some kind that comes in after the military that builds nations or all of that? Is that on your radar screen?
- In the non-military area of influencing events around the world, the financial and economic area, the World Bank President Wolfensohn said recently, Governor, that U.S. contributions to overseas development assistance is lower now almost than it has ever been. Is that a problem for you? Do you think -- what is your -- what is your idea about what the United States' obligations are? I'm talking about financial assistance and that sort of thing to other countries, the poor countries.
- Do you think we're meeting our obligations properly?

- First, a couple of follow-ups from the vice presidential debate last week. Vice President Gore, would you support or sign, as president, a federal law banning racial profiling by police and other authorities at all levels of government?
- What -- if you become president, Governor, are there other areas, racial problem areas, that you would deal with as president involving discrimination? Like you said, Arab-Americans, but also Hispanics, Asians, as well as Blacks in this country.
- Vice President Gore, what would be on your racial discrimination elimination list as president?
- They were prosecuted under the murder laws, were they not, in Texas?
- Would you support a national hate crimes law?
- New subject, new question. Another vice presidential debate follow-up. Governor, both Senator Lieberman and Secretary Cheney said they were sympathetically rethinking their views on same sex relationships. What's your position on that?
- Do you believe in general terms that gays and lesbians should have the same rights as other Americans?
- Special rights, how does that affect gays and lesbians?
- New subject, new question, Vice President Gore. How do you see the connection between controlling gun sales in this country and the incidence of death by accidental or intentional use of guns?
- All right. So on guns, somebody wants to cast a vote based on your differences, where are the differences?
- Excuse me, you would have to get the license -- a photo I.D. to go in and before you could buy the gun?
- Back to the question about the differences on gun control. What are they, Governor, from your point of view, between you and the Vice President?
- New question. As I was saying. Both of you -- Governor, both of you have talked much about Medicare and health care for seniors. What about the more than 40 million younger Americans who do not have health insurance right now? What would you do about that?
- Governor, did the -- are the vice president's figures correct about Texas?
- Let's let the governor respond to that. Are those numbers correct? Are his charges correct?

- Let me put that directly to you, Vice President Gore. The reason you brought this up, is it -- are you suggesting that those numbers and that record will reflect the way Governor Bush will operate in this area of health insurance as president?
- New question, new subject. Vice President Gore, on the environment. In your 1992 book you said, quote, "We must make the rescue of our environment the central organizing principle for civilization and there must be a wrenching transformation to save the planet." Do you still feel that way?
- Explain what a brown field is to those who don't follow this.
- Where do you see the basic difference in very simple terms in two or three sentences between you and the governor on the environment? If a voter wants to make a choice, what is it?
- Would you say it's a fundamental difference?
- We've talked about supply. I just want to know for somebody -- we're getting close to the end of our time here. If somebody wanted to vote on the environment, how would you draw the differences, Governor?
- Would you believe the federal government still has some new rules and new regulations and new laws to pass in the environmental area or do you think --
- What about global warming?
- New question. Last question. For you, Governor. And this flows somewhat out of the Boston debate. You, your running mate, your campaign officials have charged that Vice President Gore exaggerates, embellishes and stretches the facts, etcetera. Are you -- do you believe these are serious issues? This is a serious issue that the voters should use in deciding which one of you two men to vote for on November 7?

October 17, 2000

The Third Gore-Bush Presidential Debate

- How do you feel about HMOs and insurance companies making the critical decisions that affect people's lives instead of the medical professionals, and why are the HMOs and insurance companies not held accountable for their decisions?
- Just a minute, Mr. Vice President. I want to -- the way the rules go here now, two minutes, two minutes, and then I'll decide whether we go on. Okay. So what I want to make sure is we understand here is before we go on to another question in the health area, would you agree that you two agree on a national patient's bill of rights?

- Governor Bush, you may answer that if you'd like. But also I'd like to know how you see the differences between the two of you, and we need to move on.
- Are either of you concerned with -- are either of you concerned with finding some feasible way to lower the price of pharmaceutical drugs such as education on minimizing intake, revamp of the FDA process or streamlining the drug companies' procedures instead of just finding more money to pay for them?
- We spend billions of dollars every year on taxes, or pay billions of dollars in taxes. Would you be open to the idea of a national health care plan for everybody? And if not, why? If so, is this something you would try to implement if you are elected into office and what would you do to implement this plan?
- I've heard a lot about education and the need to hold teachers and schools accountable, and I certainly agree with that. But as an individual with an educational background, and also a parent, I have seen a lot of instances where the parents are unresponsive to the teachers or flat out uninvolved in their child's education. How do you intend to not only hold the teachers and schools accountable but also hold parents accountable?
- What's the harm on that, what's the other side on that?
- So no vouchers under -- in a Gore administration?
- Mr. Vice President, in a school district in which I work and in countless others across the nation, we face crumbling school buildings, increased school violence, student apathy, overcrowding, lack of funding, lawsuits, the list goes on. I could mention low teacher pay but I won't. What can you tell me and my fellow American teachers today about your plans for our immediate future?
- Vice President Gore, is the governor right when he says that you're proposing the largest federal spending in years?
- Three times -- excuse me, three times bigger than what President Clinton proposed?
- Governor -- yeah, hold on one second here, thought. The governor just reversed the thing. What do you say specifically to what the vice president said tonight, he said it many, many times, that your tax cut benefits the top 1% of the wealthiest Americans, and you've heard what he said.
- All right. Why shouldn't they?
- What would you make -- what would make you the best candidate in office during the Middle East crisis?

- Mr. Vice President, today our military forces are stretched thinner and doing more than they have ever done before during peacetime. I would like to know what you are -- I think we would all like to know what you as president would do to ensure proper resourcing for the current mission and/or more selectively choosing the time and place that our forces will be used around the world.
- Would like to know why you object to the Brady Handgun bill, if you do object to it. Because in a recent TV ad it showed that the National Rifle Association says that if you are elected, that they will be working out of your office. That kind of bothers me when I see an ad like that. I want you to explain that ad to me.
- Vice President Gore. The family farms are disappearing and having a hard time even in the current positive economic environment. What steps would you or your administration take on agricultural policy developments to protect the family farms for this multi-functional service they perform?
- A quick thing on the inheritance tax. There is a difference between the two of you on this. Vice President Gore?
- Hi, Governor. I'm very concerned about the morality of our country now. TV, movies, the music that our children are, you know, barraged with every day. And I want to know if there's anything that can be worked out with the -- Hollywood, or whoever, to help get rid of some of this bad language and whatever, you know. It's just bringing the country down. And our children are very important to us and we're concerned about their education at school. We should be concerned about their education at home, also. Thank you.
- It seems that when we hear about issues of this campaign, it's usually Medicare, Social Security or prescription drugs. As a college professor, I hear a lot of apathy amongst young people who feel that there are no issues directed to them. And they don't plan to vote. How do you address that?
- Hi. How will your administration address diversity, inclusiveness, and what role will affirmative action play in your overall plan?
- Governor, what is your -- are you opposed to affirmative action?
- How will your tax proposals affect me as a middle-class, 34-year-old single person with no dependents?
- In one of the last debates held, the subject of capital punishment came up, and in your response to the question, you seemed overly joyed and as a matter of fact proud that Texas led the nation in the execution of prisoners. Sir, did I misread your response and are you really, really proud of the fact that Texas is number one in executions?
- Do both of you believe the death penalty actually deters crime? Governor?

- Yes. My 6th grade class at St. Claire's School wanted to ask of all these promises you guys are making and all the pledges, will you keep them when you're in office? (LAUGHTER)
- Both of you -- both of you on this subject. There are other questions that also go to this skepticism, not necessarily about you, but all people in politics. Why is that?

October 5, 2000

The Lieberman-Cheney Vice Presidential Debate

- Senator, few hard working Americans would base their well-being on bonuses they hope to get five or ten years from now. Why do you, and you, Secretary Cheney, predict surpluses you cannot possibly guarantee to pay for your proposed programs?
- You alluded to problems. There's no magic bullet -- Secretary Cheney, in this question to you -- no magic bullets to solve the problems of public education. What is the next best solution?
- Time. The next question goes to you. Gentlemen, this is the 21st Century. Yet on average an American working woman in our great nation earns 75 cents for each \$1 earned by a working male. What do you males propose to do about it?
- Mr. Secretary, this question is for you. Would you support the effort of House Republicans who want legislation to restrict distribution of the abortion drug RU-486?
- This question is for you, Senator. If Yugoslavia's Slobodan Milosevic prevails, notwithstanding the election results, would you support his overthrow?
- Your question, Mr. Secretary. You and Governor Bush charge the Clinton-Gore administration have presided over the deterioration and overextension of America's armed forces. Should U.S. military personnel be deployed as warriors or peacekeepers?
- Senator Lieberman, this question to you. Once again in the Middle East, peace talks on the one hand, deadly confrontations on the other, and the flashpoint, Jerusalem, and then there's Syria. Is United States policy what it should be?
- This question is for you, Mr. Secretary. If Iraq's president Saddam Hussein were found to be developing weapons of mass destruction, Governor Bush has said he would, quote, "Take him out." Would you agree with such a deadly policy?
- Senator Lieberman, this question is for you. Many experts are forecasting continuing chaotic oil prices in the world market. Wholesale natural gas prices here in our country are leaping. Then there are coal and electricity. Have previous Republican and Democratic Congresses and administrations, including this one, done their job to protect the American people?

- Thank you, sir. Your congressional record, you sponsored a bill that said no to oil and gas exploration in the Wyoming wilderness areas of your home state. However, you co-sponsored a bill that said yes to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Your explanation?
- This question is for you, Senator. We all know Social Security is the backbone of the retirement system in our nation. Can either of you pledge tonight categorically that no one will lose benefits under your plans?
- Mr. Secretary, this question is for you. Washington is a cauldron of political bickering and partisanship. The American people, gentleman, have had enough. How would you elevate political discourse and purpose?
- Dick Cheney, Joe Lieberman, you are black for this question. Imagine yourself an African-American. You become the target of racial profiling either while walking or driving. African-American Joseph Lieberman, what would you do about it?
- Senator, sexual orientation. Should a male who loves a male and a female who loves a female have all -- all the constitutional rights enjoyed by every American citizen?
- Mr. Secretary. Vice President of the United States of America, what would you bring to the job that your opponent wouldn't?
- Have you noticed a contradiction or hypocritical shift by your opponent on positions and issues since he was nominated?

2004 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:
September 30, 2004

The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate

- Do you believe you could do a better job than President Bush in preventing another 9/11-type terrorist attack on the United States?
- Do you believe the election of Senator Kerry on November the 2nd would increase the chances of the U.S. being hit by another 9/11-type terrorist attack?
- "Colossal misjudgments." What colossal misjudgments, in your opinion, has President Bush made in these areas?
- What about Senator Kerry's point, the comparison he drew between the priorities of going after Osama bin Laden and going after Saddam Hussein?
- As president, what would you do, specifically, in addition to or differently to increase the homeland security of the United States than what President Bush is doing?

- What criteria would you use to determine when to start bringing U.S. troops home from Iraq?
- Speaking of Vietnam, you spoke to Congress in 1971, after you came back from Vietnam, and you said, quote, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" Are Americans now dying in Iraq for a mistake?
- New question, Mr. President, two minutes. You have said there was a, quote, "miscalculation," of what the conditions would be in post-war Iraq. What was the miscalculation, and how did it happen?
- New question. Senator Kerry, two minutes. You just -- you've repeatedly accused President Bush -- not here tonight, but elsewhere before -- of not telling the truth about Iraq, essentially of lying to the American people about Iraq. Give us some examples of what you consider to be his not telling the truth.
- Has the war in Iraq been worth the cost of American lives, 1,052 as of today?
- Can you give us specifics, in terms of a scenario, time lines, et cetera, for ending major U.S. military involvement in Iraq?
- Mr. President, new question. Two minutes. Does the Iraq experience make it more likely or less likely that you would take the United States into another preemptive military action?
- What is your position on the whole concept of preemptive war?
- New question, Mr. President. Do you believe that diplomacy and sanctions can resolve the nuclear problems with North Korea and Iran? Take them in any order you would like.
- I want to make sure -- yes, sir -- but in this one minute, I want to make sure that we understand -- the people watching understand the differences between the two of you on this. You want to continue the multinational talks, correct?
- Senator Kerry, you mentioned Darfur, the Darfur region of Sudan. Fifty thousand people have already died in that area. More than a million are homeless. And it's been labeled an act of ongoing genocide. Yet neither one of you or anyone else connected with your campaigns or your administration that I can find has discussed the possibility of sending in troops. Why not?
- New question, President Bush. Clearly, as we have heard, major policy differences between the two of you. Are there also underlying character issues that you believe, that you believe are serious enough to deny Senator Kerry the job as commander in chief of the United States?

- If you are elected president, what will you take to that office thinking is the single most serious threat to the national security to the United States?
- Just for this one-minute discussion here, just for whatever seconds it takes: So it's correct to say, that if somebody is listening to this, that both of you agree, if you're reelected, Mr. President, and if you are elected, the single most serious threat you believe, both of you believe, is nuclear proliferation?
- All right. Mr. President, this is the last question. And two minutes. It's a new subject -- new question, and it has to do with President Putin and Russia. Did you misjudge him or are you -- do you feel that what he is doing in the name of antiterrorism by changing some democratic processes is OK?
- ... talking about the truth of the matter. He used the word "truth" again. Did that raise any hackles with you?

October 5, 2004

The Cheney-Edwards Vice Presidential Debate

- Vice President Cheney, there have been new developments in Iraq, especially having to do with the administration's handling. Paul Bremer, the former head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, gave a speech in which he said that we have never had enough troops on the ground, or we've never had enough troops on the ground. Donald Rumsfeld said he has not seen any hard evidence of a link between Al Qaida and Saddam Hussein. Was this approved -- of a report that you requested that you received a week ago that showed there was no connection between Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Saddam Hussein?
- You and Senator Kerry have said that the war in Iraq is the wrong war at the wrong time. Does that mean that if you had been president and vice president that Saddam Hussein would still be in power?
- Tonight we mentioned Afghanistan. We believe that Osama bin Laden is hiding perhaps in a cave somewhere along the Afghan-Pakistan border. If you get a second term, what is your plan to capture him and then to neutralize those who have sprung up to replace him?
- New question to you, Senator Edwards, but I don't want to let go of the global test question first, because...I want people to understand exactly what it is, as you said, that Senator Kerry did say. He said, "You've got to do" -- you know, he was asked about preemptive action at the last debate -- he said, "You've got to do it in a way that passes the test, that passes the global test where your countrymen, your people understand fully why you're doing what you're doing and can prove to the world that you did it for legitimate reasons." What is a global test if it's not a global veto?
- Mr. Vice President, a new question for you. You have two minutes to respond. When the president says that Senator Kerry is emboldening enemies and you say that we could get hit again if voters

make the wrong choice in November, are you saying that it would be a dangerous thing to have John Kerry as president?

- Part of what you have said and Senator Kerry has said that you are going to do in order to get us out of the problems in Iraq is to internationalize the effort. Yet French and German officials have both said they have no intention even if John Kerry is elected of sending any troops into Iraq for any peacekeeping effort. Does that make your effort or your plan to internationalize this effort seem kind of naive?
- If this report that we've read about today is true, and if Vice President Cheney ordered it and asked about this, do you think that, in the future, that your administration or the Bush administration would have sufficient and accurate enough intelligence to be able to make decisions about where to go next?
- Mr. Vice President, in June of 2000 when you were still CEO of Halliburton, you said that U.S. businesses should be allowed to do business with Iran because, quote, "Unilateral sanctions almost never work." After four years as vice president now, and with Iran having been declared by your administration as part of the "Axis of Evil," do you still believe that we should lift sanctions on Iran?
- Senator Edwards, as we wrap up the foreign policy part of this, I do want to talk to you about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Today, a senior member of Islamic Jihad was killed in Gaza. There have been suicide bombings, targeted assassinations, mortar attacks, all of this continuing at a time when the United States seems absent in the peace-making process. What would your administration do? First of all, do you agree that the United States is absent? Maybe you don't. But what would your administration do to try to resolve that conflict?
- Mr. Vice President, the Census Bureau ranked Cleveland as the biggest poor city in the country, 31 percent jobless rate. You two gentlemen are pretty well off. You did well for yourselves in the private sector. What can you tell the people of Cleveland, or people of cities like Cleveland, that your administration will do to better their lives?
- Senator Kerry said in a recent interview that he absolutely will not raise taxes on anyone under -- who earns under \$200,000 a year. How can he guarantee that and also cut the deficit in half, as he's promised?
- I want to read something you said four years ago at this very setting: "Freedom means freedom for everybody." You said it again recently when you were asked about legalizing same-sex unions. And you used your family's experience as a context for your remarks. Can you describe then your administration's support for a constitutional ban on same-sex unions?
- As the vice president mentioned, John Kerry comes from the state of Massachusetts, which has taken as big a step as any state in the union to legalize gay marriage. Yet both you and Senator Kerry say you oppose it. Are you trying to have it both ways?

- This one is for you, Mr. Vice President. President Bush has derided John Kerry for putting a trial lawyer on the ticket. You yourself have said that lawsuits are partly to blame for higher medical costs. Are you willing to say that John Edwards, sitting here, has been part of the problem?
- Senator Edwards, new question to you, same topic. Do you feel personally attacked when Vice President Cheney talks about liability reform and tort reform and the president talks about having a trial lawyer on the ticket?
- I will talk to you about health care, Mr. Vice President. You have two minutes. But in particular, I want to talk to you about AIDS, and not about AIDS in China or Africa, but AIDS right here in this country, where black women between the ages of 25 and 44 are 13 times more likely to die of the disease than their counterparts. What should the government's role be in helping to end the growth of this epidemic?
- Ten men and women have been nominees of their parties since 1976 to be vice president. Out of those ten, you have the least governmental experience of any of them. What qualifies you to be a heartbeat away?
- Mr. Vice President, picking up on that, you both just sang the praises of the tops of your ticket. Without mentioning them by name at all, explain to us why you are different from your opponent, starting with you, Mr. Vice President.
- Flip-flopping has become a recurring theme in this campaign, you may have noticed. Senator Kerry changed his mind about whether to vote to authorize the president to go to war. President Bush changed his mind about whether a homeland security department was a good idea or a 9/11 Commission was a good idea. What's wrong with a little flip-flop every now and then?

October 8, 2004

The Second Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate

- Senator Kerry, after talking with several co-workers and family and friends, I asked the ones who said they were not voting for you, "Why?" They said that you were too wishy-washy. Do you have a reply for them?
- Mr. President, yesterday in a statement you admitted that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction, but justified the invasion by stating, I quote, "He retained the knowledge, the materials, the means and the intent to produce weapons of mass destruction and could have passed this knowledge to our terrorist enemies." Do you sincerely believe this to be a reasonable justification for invasion when this statement applies to so many other countries, including North Korea?
- Senator Kerry, the U.S. is preparing a new Iraq government and will proceed to withdraw U.S. troops. Would you proceed with the same plans as President Bush?

- Mr. President, my mother and sister traveled abroad this summer, and when they got back they talked to us about how shocked they were at the intensity of aggravation that other countries had with how we handled the Iraq situation. Diplomacy is obviously something that we really have to really work on. What is your plan to repair relations with other countries given the current situation?
- Iran sponsors terrorism and has missiles capable of hitting Israel and southern Europe. Iran will have nuclear weapons in two to three years' time. In the event that U.N. sanctions don't stop this threat, what will you do as president?
- Mr. President, since we continue to police the world, how do you intend to maintain our military presence without reinstituting a draft?
- Senator Kerry, we have been fortunate that there have been no further terrorist attacks on American soil since 9/11. Why do you think this is? And if elected, what will you do to assure our safety?
- I want to extend for a minute, Senator. And I'm curious about something you said. You said, "It's not when, but if." You think it's inevitable because the sense of security is a very basic thing with everybody in this country worried about their kids.
- Mr. President, why did you block the reimportation of safer and inexpensive drugs from Canada which would have cut 40 to 60 percent off of the cost?
- Senator Kerry, you've stated your concern for the rising cost of health care, yet you chose a vice presidential candidate who has made millions of dollars successfully suing medical professionals. How do you reconcile this with the voters?
- Senator Kerry, we got several questions along this line, and I'm just curious if you'd go further on what you talked about with tort reform. Would you be favoring capping awards on pain and suffering? Would you limit attorney's fees?
- Mr. President, you have enjoyed a Republican majority in the House and Senate for most of your presidency. In that time, you've not vetoed a single spending bill. Excluding \$120 billion spent in Iran and -- I'm sorry, Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been \$700 billion spent and not paid for by taxes. Please explain how the spending you have approved and not paid for is better for the American people than the spending proposed by your opponent.
- I both -- I heard you both say -- I have heard you both say during the campaign, I just heard you say it, that you're going to cut the deficit by a half in four years. But I didn't hear one thing in the last three and a half minutes that would indicate how either one of you do that.

- Senator Kerry, would you be willing to look directly into the camera and, using simple and unequivocal language, give the American people your solemn pledge not to sign any legislation that will increase the tax burden on families earning less than \$200,000 a year during your first term?
- I'm going to come back one more time to how these numbers add up and how you can cut that deficit in half in four years, given what you've both said.
- Mr. President, how would you rate yourself as an environmentalist? What specifically has your administration done to improve the condition of our nation's air and water supply?
- Senator Kerry, how can the U.S. be competitive in manufacturing given -- in manufacturing, excuse me -- given the wage necessary and comfortably accepted for American workers to maintain the standard of living that they expect?
- Senator, I want to extend for a minute, you talk about tax credits to stop outsourcing. But when you have IBM documents that I saw recently where you can hire a programmer for \$12 in China, \$56 an hour here, tax credits won't cut it.
- President Bush, 45 days after 9/11, Congress passed the Patriot Act, which takes away checks on law enforcement and weakens American citizens' rights and freedoms, especially Fourth Amendment rights. With expansions to the Patriot Act and Patriot Act II, my question to you is, why are my rights being watered down and my citizens' around me? And what are the specific justifications for these reforms?
- Senator Kerry, thousands of people have already been cured or treated by the use of adult stem cells or umbilical cord stem cells. However, no one has been cured by using embryonic stem cells. Wouldn't it be wise to use stem cells obtained without the destruction of an embryo?
- Mr. President, if there were a vacancy in the Supreme Court and you had the opportunity to fill that position today, who would you choose and why?
- Senator Kerry, suppose you are speaking with a voter who believed abortion is murder and the voter asked for reassurance that his or her tax dollars would not go to support abortion, what would you say to that person?
- President Bush, during the last four years, you have made thousands of decisions that have affected millions of lives. Please give three instances in which you came to realize you had made a wrong decision, and what you did to correct it. Thank you.

October 13, 2004

The Third Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate

- Senator, I want to set the stage for this discussion by asking the question that I think hangs over all of our politics today and is probably on the minds of many people watching this debate tonight. And that is, will our children and grandchildren ever live in a world as safe and secure as the world in which we grew up?
- We are talking about protecting ourselves from the unexpected, but the flu season is suddenly upon us. Flu kills thousands of people every year. Suddenly we find ourselves with a severe shortage of flu vaccine. How did that happen?
- Senator Kerry, a new question. Let's talk about economic security. You pledged during the last debate that you would not raise taxes on those making less than \$200,000 a year. But the price of everything is going up, and we all know it. Health-care costs, as you are talking about, is skyrocketing, the cost of the war. My question is, how can you or any president, whoever is elected next time, keep that pledge without running this country deeper into debt and passing on more of the bills that we're running up to our children?
- Mr. President, what do you say to someone in this country who has lost his job to someone overseas who's being paid a fraction of what that job paid here in the United States?
- New question to you, Senator Kerry, two minutes. And it's still on jobs. You know, many experts say that a president really doesn't have much control over jobs. For example, if someone invents a machine that does the work of five people, that's progress. That's not the president's fault. So I ask you, is it fair to blame the administration entirely for this loss of jobs?
- Both of you are opposed to gay marriage. But to understand how you have come to that conclusion, I want to ask you a more basic question. Do you believe homosexuality is a choice?
- The New York Times reports that some Catholic archbishops are telling their church members that it would be a sin to vote for a candidate like you because you support a woman's right to choose an abortion and unlimited stem-cell research. What is your reaction to that?
- Health insurance costs have risen over 36 percent over the last four years according to The Washington Post. We're paying more. We're getting less. I would like to ask you: Who bears responsibility for this? Is it the government? Is it the insurance companies? Is it the lawyers? Is it the doctors? Is it the administration?
- You have, as you have proposed and as the president has commented on tonight, proposed a massive plan to extend health-care coverage to children. You're also talking about the government picking up a big part of the catastrophic bills that people get at the hospital. And you have said that you can pay for this by rolling back the president's tax cut on the upper 2 percent. You heard the

president say earlier tonight that it's going to cost a whole lot more money than that. I'd just ask you, where are you going to get the money?

- Mr. President, the next question is to you. We all know that Social Security is running out of money, and it has to be fixed. You have proposed to fix it by letting people put some of the money collected to pay benefits into private savings accounts. But the critics are saying that's going to mean finding \$1 trillion over the next 10 years to continue paying benefits as those accounts are being set up. So where do you get the money? Are you going to have to increase the deficit by that much over 10 years?
- Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, says there's no way that Social Security can pay retirees what we have promised them unless we recalibrate. What he's suggesting, we're going to cut benefits or we're going to have to raise the retirement age. We may have to take some other reform. But if you've just said, you've promised no changes, does that mean you're just going to leave this as a problem, another problem for our children to solve?
- I got more e-mail this week on this question than any other question. And it is about immigration. I'm told that at least 8,000 people cross our borders illegally every day. Some people believe this is a security issue, as you know. Some believe it's an economic issue. Some see it as a human-rights issue. How do you see it? And what do we need to do about it?
- The gap between rich and poor is growing wider. More people are dropping into poverty. Yet the minimum wage has been stuck at, what, \$5. 15 an hour now for about seven years. Is it time to raise it?
- Mr. President, I want to go back to something Senator Kerry said earlier tonight and ask a follow-up of my own. He said -- and this will be a new question to you -- he said that you had never said whether you would like to overturn Roe v. Wade. So I'd ask you directly, would you like to?
- Senator, the last debate, President Bush said he did not favor a draft. You agreed with him. But our National Guard and Reserve forces are being severely strained because many of them are being held beyond their enlistments. Some of them say that it's a back-door draft. Is there any relief that could be offered to these brave Americans and their families?
- If you became president, Senator Kerry, what would you do about this situation of holding National Guard and Reservists for these extended periods of time and these repeated call-ups that they're now facing?
- You said that if Congress would vote to extend the ban on assault weapons, that you'd sign the legislation, but you did nothing to encourage the Congress to extend it. Why not?

- Affirmative action: Do you see a need for affirmative action programs, or have we moved far enough along that we no longer need to use race and gender as a factor in school admissions and federal and state contracts and so on?
- You were asked before the invasion, or after the invasion, of Iraq if you'd checked with your dad. And I believe, I don't remember the quote exactly, but I believe you said you had checked with a higher authority. I would like to ask you, what part does your faith play on your policy decisions?
- Senator Kerry, after 9/11 -- and this is a new question for you -- it seemed to me that the country came together as I've never seen it come together since World War II. But some of that seems to have melted away. I think it's fair to say we've become pretty polarized, perhaps because of the political season. But if you were elected president, or whoever is elected president, will you set a priority in trying to bring the nation back together? Or what would be your attitude on that?
- We've come, gentlemen, to our last question. And it occurred to me as I came to this debate tonight that the three of us share something. All three of us are surrounded by very strong women. We're all married to strong women. Each of us have two daughters that make us very proud. I'd like to ask each of you, what is the most important thing you've learned from these strong women?

2008 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:
September 26, 2008

The First McCain-Obama Presidential Debate

- Let me begin with something General Eisenhower said in his 1952 presidential campaign. Quote, "We must achieve both security and solvency. In fact, the foundation of military strength is economic strength," end quote. With that in mind, the first lead question. Gentlemen, at this very moment tonight, where do you stand on the financial recovery plan?
- All right, let's go back to my question. How do you all stand on the recovery plan? And talk to each other about it. We've got five minutes. We can negotiate a deal right here. But, I mean, are you -- do you favor this plan, Senator Obama, and you, Senator McCain? Do you -- are you in favor of this plan?
- Are you going to vote for the plan, Senator McCain?
- Do you have something directly to say, Senator Obama, to Senator McCain about what he just said?
- So, Senator McCain, do you agree with what Senator Obama just said? And, if you don't, tell him what you disagree with.
- And using your word "fundamental," are there fundamental differences between your approach and Senator Obama's approach to what you would do as president to lead this country out of the financial crisis?

- Respond directly to him about that, to Senator Obama about that, about the -- he's made it twice now, about your tax -- your policies about tax cuts.
- All right. All right, speaking of things that both of you want, another lead question, and it has to do with the rescue -- the financial rescue thing that we started -- started asking about. And what -- and the first answer is to you, Senator Obama. As president, as a result of whatever financial rescue plan comes about and the billion, \$700 billion, whatever it is it's going to cost, what are you going to have to give up, in terms of the priorities that you would bring as president of the United States, as a result of having to pay for the financial rescue plan?
- Are you -- what priorities would you adjust, as president, Senator McCain, because of the -- because of the financial bailout cost?
- But if I hear the two of you correctly neither one of you is suggesting any major changes in what you want to do as president as a result of the financial bailout? Is that what you're saying?
- What I'm trying to get at this is this. Excuse me if I may, senator. Trying to get at that you all -- one of you is going to be the president of the United States come January. At the -- in the middle of a huge financial crisis that is yet to be resolved. And what I'm trying to get at is how this is going to affect you not in very specific -- small ways but in major ways and the approach to take as to the presidency.
- Before we go to another lead question. Let me figure out a way to ask the same question in a slightly different way here. Are you -- are you willing to acknowledge both of you that this financial crisis is going to affect the way you rule the country as president of the United States beyond the kinds of things that you have already -- I mean, is it a major move? Is it going to have a major affect?
- All right. Let's go another subject. Lead question, two minutes to you, senator McCain. Much has been said about the lessons of Vietnam. What do you see as the lessons of Iraq?
- Afghanistan, lead -- a new -- a new lead question. Now, having resolved Iraq, we'll move to Afghanistan. And it goes to you, Senator Obama, and it's a -- it picks up on a point that's already been made. Do you think more troops -- more U.S. troops should be sent to Afghanistan, how many, and when?
- New lead question. And it goes two minutes to you, Senator McCain, what is your reading on the threat from Iran right now to the security of the United States?
- Russia, goes to you, two minutes, Senator Obama. How do you see the relationship with Russia? Do you see them as a competitor? Do you see them as an enemy? Do you see them as a potential partner?
- You see any -- do you have a major difference with what he just said?

- What do you think the likelihood is that there would be another 9/11-type attack on the continental United States?
- Do you agree there's much to be done in a new administration to restore...
- You see the same connections that Senator McCain does?

October 2, 2008

The Biden-Palin Vice Presidential Debate

- The House of Representatives this week passed a bill, a big bailout bill -- or didn't pass it, I should say. The Senate decided to pass it, and the House is wrestling with it still tonight. As America watches these things happen on Capitol Hill, Senator Biden, was this the worst of Washington or the best of Washington that we saw play out?
- You both would like to be vice president. Senator Biden, how, as vice president, would you work to shrink this gap of polarization which has sprung up in Washington, which you both have spoken about here tonight?
- Governor, Senator, neither of you really answered that last question about what you would do as vice president. I'm going to come back to that...throughout the evening to try to see if we can look forward, as well. Now, let's talk about -- the next question is to talk about the subprime lending meltdown. Who do you think was at fault? I start with you, Governor Palin. Was it the greedy lenders? Was it the risky home-buyers who shouldn't have been buying a home in the first place? And what should you be doing about it?
- Governor, please if you want to respond to what he said about Senator McCain's comments about health care?
- OK, our time is up here. We've got to move to the next question. Senator Biden, we want to talk about taxes, let's talk about taxes. You proposed raising taxes on people who earn over \$250,000 a year. The question for you is, why is that not class warfare and the same question for you, Governor Palin, is you have proposed taxing employer health benefits which some studies say would actually throw five million more people onto the rolls of the uninsured. I want to know why that isn't taking things out on the poor, starting with you, Senator Biden.
- Governor, are you interested in defending Senator McCain's health care plan?
- I want to get -- try to get you both to answer a question that neither of your principals quite answered when my colleague, Jim Lehrer, asked it last week, starting with you, Senator Biden. What promises -- given the events of the week, the bailout plan, all of this, what promises have you and your campaigns made to the American people that you're not going to be able to keep?

- So, Governor, as vice president, there's nothing that you have promised as a candidate that you would -- that you wouldn't take off the table because of this financial crisis we're in?
- Next question, Governor Palin, still on the economy. Last year, Congress passed a bill that would make it more difficult for debt-strapped mortgage-holders to declare bankruptcy, to get out from under that debt. This is something that John McCain supported. Would you have?
- Senator Biden, you voted for this bankruptcy bill. Senator Obama voted against it. Some people have said that mortgage- holders really paid the price.
- Governor, I'm happy to talk to you in this next section about energy issues. Let's talk about climate change. What is true and what is false about what we have heard, read, discussed, debated about the causes of climate change?
- Senator, what is true and what is false about the causes?
- Let me clear something up, Senator McCain has said he supports caps on carbon emissions. Senator Obama has said he supports clean coal technology, which I don't believe you've always supported.
- We do need to keep within our two minutes. But I just wanted to ask you, do you support capping carbon emissions?
- OK. And on the clean coal issue?
- The next round of -- pardon me, the next round of questions starts with you, Senator Biden. Do you support, as they do in Alaska, granting same-sex benefits to couples?
- Governor, would you support expanding that beyond Alaska to the rest of the nation?
- Let's try to avoid nuance, Senator. Do you support gay marriage?
- You both have sons who are in Iraq or on their way to Iraq. You, Governor Palin, have said that you would like to see a real clear plan for an exit strategy. What should that be, Governor?
- Let's move to Iran and Pakistan. I'm curious about what you think starting with you Senator Biden. Which is the greater threat, a nuclear Iran or an unstable Afghanistan? Explain why.
- Governor, nuclear Pakistan, unstable Pakistan, nuclear Iran? Which is the greater threat?
- Governor and senator, I want you both to respond to this. Secretaries of State Baker, Kissinger, Powell, they have all advocated some level of engagement with enemies. Do you think these former secretaries of state are wrong on that?

- What has this administration done right or wrong -- this is the great, lingering, unresolved issue, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict -- what have they done? And is a two-state solution the solution?
- Governor, on another issue, interventionism, nuclear weapons. What should be the trigger, or should there be a trigger, when nuclear weapons use is ever put into play?
- Senator, you may talk about nuclear use, if you'd like, and also about Afghanistan.
- Senator, you have quite a record, this is the next question here, of being an interventionist. You argued for intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, initially in Iraq and Pakistan and now in Darfur, putting U.S. troops on the ground. Boots on the ground. Is this something the American public has the stomach for?
- Is there a line that should be drawn about when we decide to go in? What is it?
- Everybody gets extra credit tonight. We're going to move on to the next question. Governor, you said in July that someone would have to explain to you exactly what it is the vice president does every day. You, senator, said, you would not be vice president under any circumstances. Now maybe this was just what was going on at the time. But tell us now, looking forward, what it is you think the vice presidency is worth now.
- Governor, you mentioned a moment ago that the Constitution might give the vice president more power than it has in the past. Do you believe as Vice President Cheney does, that the Executive Branch does not hold complete sway over the office of the vice presidency, that it is also a member of the Legislative Branch?
- Vice President Cheney's interpretation of the vice presidency?
- Let's talk conventional wisdom for a moment. The conventional wisdom, Governor Palin, with you, is that your Achilles heel is that you lack experience. Your conventional wisdom against you is that your Achilles heel is that you lack discipline, Senator Biden. What is it really for you, Governor Palin? What is it really for you, Senator Biden? Start with you, governor.
- Final question tonight, before your closing statements, starting with you, Senator Biden. Can you think of a single issue -- and this is to cast light for people who are just trying to get to know you in your final debate, your only debate of this year -- can you think of a single issue, policy issue, in which you were forced to change a long-held view in order to accommodate changed circumstances?
- Let's come full circle. You both want to bring both sides together. You both talk about bipartisanship. Once again, we saw what happened this week in Washington. How do you change the tone, as vice president, as number-two?

October 7, 2008

The Second McCain-Obama Presidential Debate

- With the economy on the downturn and retired and older citizens and workers losing their incomes, what's the fastest, most positive solution to bail these people out of the economic ruin?
- Senator, we have one minute for a discussion here. Obviously the powers of the treasury secretary have been greatly expanded. The most powerful officer in the cabinet now. Hank Paulson says he won't stay on. Who do you have in mind to appoint to that very important post?
- All right. Senator McCain -- Senator Obama, who do you have in mind for treasury secretary?
- Well, Senators, through this economic crisis, most of the people that I know have had a difficult time. And through this bailout package, I was wondering what it is that's going to actually help those people out.
- Senator Obama, time for a discussion. I'm going to begin with you. Are you saying to Mr. Clark and to the other members of the American television audience that the American economy is going to get much worse before it gets better and they ought to be prepared for that?
- Senator McCain, in all candor, do you think the economy is going to get worse before it gets better?
- How can we trust either of you with our money when both parties got -- got us into this global economic crisis?
- There are new economic realities out there that everyone in this hall and across this country understands that there are going to have to be some choices made. Health policies, energy policies, and entitlement reform, what are going to be your priorities in what order? Which of those will be your highest priority your first year in office and which will follow in sequence?
- The three -- health care, energy, and entitlement reform: Social Security and Medicare. In what order would you put them in terms of priorities?
- Senator McCain, for you, we have our first question from the Internet tonight. A child of the Depression, 78-year-old Fiora from Chicago. Since World War II, we have never been asked to sacrifice anything to help our country, except the blood of our heroic men and women. As president, what sacrifices -- sacrifices will you ask every American to make to help restore the American dream and to get out of the economic morass that we're now in?
- Senator Obama, as we begin, very quickly, our discussion period, President Bush, you'll remember, last summer, said that "Wall Street got drunk." A lot of people now look back and think the federal government got drunk and, in fact, the American consumers got drunk. How would you, as president, try to break those bad habits of too much debt and too much easy credit, specifically,

across the board, for this country, not just at the federal level, but as a model for the rest of the country, as well?

- There are lots of issues that we are going to be dealing with here tonight. And we have a question from Langdon in Ballston Spa, New York, and that's about huge unfunded obligations for Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs that will soon eat up all of the revenue that's in place and then go into a deficit position. Since the rules are pretty loose here, I'm going to add my own to this one. Instead of having a discussion, let me ask you as a coda to that. Would you give Congress a date certain to reform Social Security and Medicare within two years after you take office? Because in a bipartisan way, everyone agrees, that's a big ticking time bomb that will eat us up maybe even more than the mortgage crisis.
- Senator McCain, two years for a reform of entitlement programs?
- Senator McCain, I want to know, we saw that Congress moved pretty fast in the face of an economic crisis. I want to know what you would do within the first two years to make sure that Congress moves fast as far as environmental issues, like climate change and green jobs?
- Should we fund a Manhattan-like project that develops a nuclear bomb to deal with global energy and alternative energy or should we fund 100,000 garages across America, the kind of industry and innovation that developed Silicon Valley?
- Senator, selling health care coverage in America as the marketable commodity has become a very profitable industry. Do you believe health care should be treated as a commodity?
- Quick discussion. Is health care in America a privilege, a right, or a responsibility?
- Yes. Senator McCain, how will all the recent economic stress affect our nation's ability to act as a peacemaker in the world?
- Senator Obama, let me ask you if -- let's see if we can establish tonight the Obama doctrine and the McCain doctrine for the use of United States combat forces in situations where there's a humanitarian crisis, but it does not affect our national security. Take the Congo, where 4.5 million people have died since 1998, or take Rwanda in the earlier dreadful days, or Somalia. What is the Obama doctrine for use of force that the United States would send when we don't have national security issues at stake?
- Should the United States respect Pakistani sovereignty and not pursue al Qaeda terrorists who maintain bases there, or should we ignore their borders and pursue our enemies like we did in Cambodia during the Vietnam War?
- Can I get a quick response from the two of you about developments in Afghanistan this week? The senior British military commander, who is now leading there for a second tour, and their senior

diplomatic presence there, Sherard Cowper-Coles, who is well known as an expert in the area, both have said that we're failing in Afghanistan. The commander said we cannot win there. We've got to get it down to a low level insurgency, let the Afghans take it over. Cowper-Coles said what we need is an acceptable dictator. If either of you becomes president, as one of you will, how do you reorganize Afghanistan's strategy or do you? Briefly, if you can.

- Senator McCain, this question is for you from the Internet. It's from Alden in Hewitt, Texas. How can we apply pressure to Russia for humanitarian issues in an effective manner without starting another Cold War?
- This requires only a yes or a no. Ronald Reagan famously said that the Soviet Union was the evil empire. Do you think that Russia under Vladimir Putin is an evil empire?
- If, despite your best diplomatic efforts, Iran attacks Israel, would you be willing to commit U.S. troops in support and defense of Israel? Or would you wait on approval from the U.N. Security Council?
- All right, gentlemen, we've come to the last question. And you'll both be interested to know this comes from the Internet and it's from a state that you're strongly contesting, both of you. It's from Peggy in Amherst, New Hampshire. And it has a certain Zen-like quality, I'll give you a fair warning. She says, "What don't you know and how will you learn it?"

October 15, 2008

The Third McCain-Obama Presidential Debate

- Another very bad day on Wall Street, as both of you know. Both of you proposed new plans this week to address the economic crisis. Senator McCain, you proposed a \$52 billion plan that includes new tax cuts on capital gains, tax breaks for seniors, write-offs for stock losses, among other things. Senator Obama, you proposed \$60 billion in tax cuts for middle- income and lower-income people, more tax breaks to create jobs, new spending for public works projects to create jobs. I will ask both of you: Why is your plan better than his?
- All right. Would you like to ask him a question?
- We found out yesterday that this year's deficit will reach an astounding record high \$455 billion. Some experts say it could go to \$1 trillion next year. Both of you have said you want to reduce the deficit, but the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget ran the numbers on both of your proposals and they say the cost of your proposals, even with the savings you claim can be made, each will add more than \$200 billion to the deficit. Aren't you both ignoring reality? Won't some of the programs you are proposing have to be trimmed, postponed, even eliminated? Give us some specifics on what you're going to cut back.
- The question was, what are you going to cut?

- Do either of you think you can balance the budget in four years? You have said previously you thought you could, Senator McCain.
- All right. We're going to move to another question and the topic is leadership in this campaign. Both of you pledged to take the high road in this campaign yet it has turned very nasty. Senator Obama, your campaign has used words like "erratic," "out of touch," "lie," "angry," "losing his bearings" to describe Senator McCain. Senator McCain, your commercials have included words like "disrespectful," "dangerous," "dishonorable," "he lied." Your running mate said he "palled around with terrorists." Are each of you tonight willing to sit at this table and say to each other's face what your campaigns and the people in your campaigns have said about each other?
- All right. Let's go to the next topic and you -- we may want to get back into some of this during this next discussion. I want to ask both of you about the people that you're going to bring into the government. And our best insight yet is who you have picked as your running mates. So I'll begin by asking both of you this question, and I'll ask you to answer first, Senator Obama. Why would the country be better off if your running mate became president rather than his running mate?
- Do you think she's qualified to be president?
- Do you think Senator Biden is qualified?
- Let's talk about energy and climate control. Every president since Nixon has said what both of you...Climate change, yes -- has said what both of you have said, and, that is, we must reduce our dependence on foreign oil. When Nixon said it, we imported from 17 to 34 percent of our foreign oil. Now, we're importing more than 60 percent. Would each of you give us a number, a specific number of how much you believe we can reduce our foreign oil imports during your first term?
- All right. Can we reduce our dependence on foreign oil and by how much in the first term, in four years?
- All right, let's go to a new topic, health care. Given the current economic situation, would either of you now favor controlling health care costs over expanding health care coverage?
- Senator McCain, you believe Roe v. Wade should be overturned. Senator Obama, you believe it shouldn't. Could either of you ever nominate someone to the Supreme Court who disagrees with you on this issue?
- But you don't want Roe v. Wade to be overturned?
- But even if it was someone -- even someone who had a history of being for abortion rights, you would consider them?
- Let's stop there, because I want to get in a question on education and I'm afraid this is going to have to be our last question, gentlemen. The question is this: the U.S. spends more per capita than

any other country on education. Yet, by every international measurement, in math and science competence, from kindergarten through the 12th grade, we trail most of the countries of the world. The implications of this are clearly obvious. Some even say it poses a threat to our national security. Do you feel that way and what do you intend to do about it?

- Do you think the federal government should play a larger role in the schools? And I mean, more federal money?

2012 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:
October 3, 2012

The First Obama-Romney Presidential Debate

- Let's start the economy, segment one, and let's begin with jobs. What are the major differences between the two of you about how you would go about creating new jobs?
- Mr. President, please respond directly to what the governor just said about trickle-down -- his trickle-down approach, as he said yours is.
- Governor Romney, do you have a question that you'd like to ask the president directly about something he just said?
- All right. What is the difference? Let's just stay on taxes.
- Do you challenge what the governor just said about his own plan?
- All right. Let's talk -- we're still on the economy. This is, theoretically now, a second segment still on the economy, and specifically on what to do about the federal deficit, the federal debt. And the question, you each have two minutes on this, and Governor Romney, you -- you go first because the president went first on segment one. And the question is this, what are the differences between the two of you as to how you would go about tackling the deficit problem in this country?
- Governor, what about Simpson-Bowles? Do you support Simpson-Bowles?
- All right? All right. This is segment three, the economy. Entitlements. First -- first answer goes to you, two minutes, Mr. President. Do you see a major difference between the two of you on Social Security?
- We'll talk about -- specifically about health care in a moment. But what -- do you support the voucher system, Governor?
- All right. So to finish quickly, briefly, on the economy, what is your view about the level of federal regulation of the economy right now? Is there too much? And in your case, Mr. President, is there - - should there be more? Beginning with you. This is not a new two-minute segment to start. And we'll go for a few minutes, and then we're going to go to health care, OK?

- Do you want to repeal Dodd-Frank?
- You want it repealed. You want the Affordable Care Act repealed. Why?
- Mr. President, the argument against repeal?
- All right, Governor. Governor, tell -- tell the president directly why you think what he just said is wrong about Obamacare?
- ... if Obamacare is repealed. How would you replace it?
- That is a terrific segue to our next segment, and is the role of government. And -- and let's see. Role of government. And it is -- you are first on this, Mr. President. And the question is this. Do you believe, both of you -- but you had the first two minutes on this, Mr. President -- do you believe there's a fundamental difference between the two of you as to how you view the mission of the federal government?
- Two minutes, Governor, on the role of government. Your view?
- All right. Let's go through some specifics in terms of what -- how each of you views the role of government. How do -- education. Does the federal government have a responsibility to improve the quality of public education in America?
- How do you see the federal government's responsibility to, as I say, to improve the quality of public education in this country?
- Do you think you have a difference with your views and -- and those of Governor Romney on -- about education and the federal government?
- Oh, well, no. But the fact is government -- the role of government and governing, we've lost a pod in other words. So we only have three -- three minutes left in the -- in the debate before we go to your closing statements. And so I want to ask finally here, and remember, we've got three minutes total time here -- and the question is this. Many of the legislative functions of the federal government right now are in a state of paralysis as a result of partisan gridlock. If elected, in your case, if re-elected, in your case, what would you do about that?

October 11, 2012

The Biden-Ryan Vice Presidential Debate

- I would like to begin with Libya. On a rather somber note, one month ago tonight, on the anniversary of 9/11, Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other brave Americans were killed in a terrorist attack in Benghazi. The State Department has now made clear, there were no protesters there: it was a pre-planned assault by heavily armed men. Wasn't this a massive intelligence failure, Vice President Biden?

- I just want to you about right in the middle of the crisis. Governor Romney, and you're talking about this again tonight, talked about the weakness; talked about apologies from the Obama administration. Was that really appropriate right in the middle of the crisis?
- What were you first told about the attack? Why -- why were people talking about protests? When people in the consulate first saw armed men attacking with guns, there were no protesters. Why did that go on (inaudible)?
- Mr. Ryan, I want to ask you about -- the Romney campaign talks a lot about no apologies. He has a book called called "No Apologies." Should the U.S. have apologized for Americans burning Korans in Afghanistan? Should the U.S. apologize for U.S. Marines urinating on Taliban corpses?
- Let's move to Iran. I'd actually like to move to Iran, because there's really no bigger national security...this country is facing. Both President Obama and Governor Romney have said they will prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, even if that means military action. Last week, former Defense Secretary Bob Gates said a strike on Iran's facilities would not work and, quote, "could prove catastrophic, haunting us for generations." Can the two of you be absolutely clear and specific to the American people how effective would a military strike be? Congressman Ryan?
- How do you do it so quickly? Look, you -- you both saw Benjamin Netanyahu hold up that picture of a bomb with a red line and talking about the red line being in spring. So can you solve this, if the Romney-Ryan ticket is elected, can you solve this in two months before spring and avoid nuclear -- nuclear...
- What about Bob Gates' statement? Let me read that again, "could prove catastrophic, haunting us for generations."
- Well, let me ask you what's worse, war in the Middle East, another war in the Middle East, or a nuclear-armed Iran?
- Gentlemen, I want to bring the conversation to a different kind of national security issue, the state of our economy. The number-one issue here at home is jobs. The percentage of unemployed just fell below 8 percent for the first time in 43 months. The Obama administration had projected that it would fall below 6 percent now after the addition of close to a trillion dollars in stimulus money. So will both of you level with the American people: Can you get unemployment to under 6 percent and how long will it take?
- You did ask for stimulus money, correct?
- Let's talk about Medicare and entitlements. Both Medicare and Social Security are going broke and taking a larger share of the budget in the process. Will benefits for Americans under these programs have to change for the programs to survive?

- But let -- let me ask you this. What -- what is your specific plan for seniors who really can't afford to make up the difference in the value of what you call a premium support plan and others call a voucher?
- Vice President Biden, let me ask you, if it could help solve the problem, why not very slowly raise the Medicare eligibility age by two years, as Congressman Ryan suggests?
- You were one of the few lawmakers to stand with President Bush when he was seeking to partially privatize Social Security.
- OK, on to taxes. If your ticket is elected, who will pay more in taxes? Who will pay less? And we're starting with Vice President Biden for two minutes.
- Well, let's talk about this 20 percent. 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 on it, and that's why you won't tell voters?
- And you guarantee this math will add up?
- Mr. Vice President, what would you suggest -- what would you suggest beyond raising taxes on the wealthy, that would substantially reduce the long-term deficit?
- Can you declare anything off-limits?
- So no massive defense increases?
- But I want to know how you do the math and have this increase in defense spending?
- And what -- what national security issues justify an increase?
- I'd like to move on to Afghanistan please. And that's one of the biggest expenditures this country has made, in dollars, and more importantly in lives. We just passed the sad milestone of losing 2,000 U.S. troops there in this war. More than 50 of them were killed this year by the very Afghan forces we are trying to help. Now, we've reached the recruiting goal for Afghan forces, we've degraded Al Qaida. So tell me, why not leave now? What more can we really accomplish? Is it worth more American lives?
- What -- what conditions could justify staying, Congressman Ryan?
- Let me go back to this. He says we're absolutely leaving in 2014. You're saying that's not an absolute, but you won't talk about what conditions would justify...
- We have -- we have soldiers and Marines. We have Afghan forces murdering our forces over there. The Taliban is, do you think, taking advantage of this timeline?

- Let me go back to the -- the surge troops that we put in there. And -- and you brought this up, Congressman Ryan. I have talked to a lot of troops. I've talked to senior offices who were concerned that the surge troops were pulled out during the fighting season, and some of them saw that as a political -- as a political move. So can you tell me, Vice President Biden, what was the military reason for bringing those surge troops home before the fighting had ended?
- Let's move to another war, the civil war in Syria, where there are estimates that more -- estimates that more than 25,000, 30,000 people have now been killed. In March of last year, President Obama explained the military action taken in Libya by saying it was in the national interest to go in and prevent further massacres from occurring there. So why doesn't the same logic apply in Syria? Vice President Biden?
- What happens if Assad does not fall, Congressman Ryan? What happens to the region? What happens if he hangs on? What happens if he does?
- So what would Romney-Ryan do about that credibility?
- What's your criteria for intervention?
- How about humanitarian interests?
- I want to move on, and I want to return home for these last few questions. This debate is, indeed, historic. We have two Catholic candidates, first time, on a stage such as this. And I would like to ask you both to tell me what role your religion has played in your own personal views on abortion. Please talk about how you came to that decision. Talk about how your religion played a part in that. And, please, this is such an emotional issue for so many people in this country...
- I want to go back to the abortion question here. If the Romney-Ryan ticket is elected, should those who believe that abortion should remain legal be worried?
- Certainly (inaudible) and you've said it here tonight, that the two of you respect our troops enormously. Your son has served and perhaps someday your children will serve as well. I recently spoke to a highly decorated soldier who said that this presidential campaign has left him dismayed. He told me, quote, "the ads are so negative and they are all tearing down each other rather than building up the country." What would you say to that American hero about this campaign? And at the end of the day, are you ever embarrassed by the tone?
- Let me -- let me calm down things here just for a minute. And I want to talk to you very briefly before we go to closing statements about your own personal character. If you are elected, what could you both give to this country as a man, as a human being, that no one else could?
- Vice President, can we get to that -- to that issue of what you could bring as a man, a human being? And I really -- I'm going to keep you to about 15 seconds here.

October 16, 2012

The Second Obama-Romney Presidential Debate

- Mr. President, Governor Romney, as a 20-year-old college student, all I hear from professors, neighbors and others is that when I graduate, I will have little chance to get employment. What can you say to reassure me, but more importantly my parents, that I will be able to sufficiently support myself after I graduate?
- Let me ask you for more immediate answer and begin with Mr. Romney just quickly what -- what can you do? We're looking at a situation where 40 percent of the unemployed have been unemployed for six months or more. They don't have the two years that Jeremy has. What about those long-term unemployed who need a job right now?
- Your energy secretary, Steven Chu, has now been on record three times stating it's not policy of his department to help lower gas prices. Do you agree with Secretary Chu that this is not the job of the Energy Department?
- Mr. President, let me just see if I can move you to the gist of this question, which is, are we looking at the new normal? I can tell you that tomorrow morning, a lot of people in Hempstead will wake up and fill up and they will find that the price of gas is over \$4 a gallon. Is it within the purview of the government to bring those prices down, or are we looking at the new normal?
- Mr. President, could you address, because we did finally get to gas prices here, could you address what the governor said, which is if your energy policy was working, the price of gasoline would not be \$4 a gallon here. Is that true?
- Governor Romney, you have stated that if you're elected president, you would plan to reduce the tax rates for all the tax brackets and that you would work with the Congress to eliminate some deductions in order to make up for the loss in revenue. Concerning the -- these various deductions, the mortgage deductions, the charitable deductions, the child tax credit and also the -- oh, what's that other credit? I forgot. Oh, I remember. The education credits, which are important to me, because I have children in college. What would be your position on those things, which are important to the middle class?
- Governor, let me ask the president something about what you just said. The governor says that he is not going to allow the top 5 percent, believe is what he said, to have a tax cut, that it will all even out, that what he wants to do is give that tax cut to the middle class. Settled?
- Mr. President, let me get -- let me get the governor in on this. And Governor, let's -- before we get into a...vast array of who says -- what study says what, if it shouldn't add up. If somehow when you get in there, there isn't enough tax revenue coming in. If somehow the numbers don't add up, would you be willing to look again at a 20 percent...

- In what new ways do you intend to rectify the inequalities in the workplace, specifically regarding females making only 72 percent of what their male counterparts earn?
- Governor Romney, pay equity for women?
- Governor Romney, I am an undecided voter, because I'm disappointed with the lack of progress I've seen in the last four years. However, I do attribute much of America's economic and international problems to the failings and missteps of the Bush administration. Since both you and President Bush are Republicans, I fear a return to the policies of those years should you win this election. What is the biggest difference between you and George W. Bush, and how do you differentiate yourself from George W. Bush?
- Mr. President, I voted for you in 2008. What have you done or accomplished to earn my vote in 2012? I'm not that optimistic as I was in 2012. Most things I need for everyday living are very expensive.
- Mr. Romney, what do you plan on doing with immigrants without their green cards that are currently living here as productive members of society?
- This question actually comes from a brain trust of my friends at Global Telecom Supply (ph) in Minneola yesterday. We were sitting around, talking about Libya, and we were reading and became aware of reports that the State Department refused extra security for our embassy in Benghazi, Libya, prior to the attacks that killed four Americans. Who was it that denied enhanced security and why?
- Because we're -- we're closing in, I want to still get a lot of people in. I want to ask you something, Mr. President, and then have the governor just quickly. Your secretary of state, as I'm sure you know, has said that she takes full responsibility for the attack on the diplomatic mission in Benghazi. Does the buck stop with your secretary of state as far as what went on here?
- President Obama, during the Democratic National Convention in 2008, you stated you wanted to keep AK-47s out of the hands of criminals. What has your administration done or planned to do to limit the availability of assault weapons?
- Governor, Governor, if I could, the question was about these assault weapons that once were once banned and are no longer banned. I know that you signed an assault weapons ban when you were in Massachusetts, obviously, with this question, you no longer do support that. Why is that, given the kind of violence that we see sometimes with these mass killings? Why is it that you have changed your mind?
- So I could -- if you could get people to agree to it, you would be for it?

- The outsourcing of American jobs overseas has taken a toll on our economy. What plans do you have to put back and keep jobs here in the United States?
- iPad, the Macs, the iPhones, they are all manufactured in China. One of the major reasons is labor is so much cheaper here. How do you convince a great American company to bring that manufacturing back here?
- Hi, Governor. I think this is a tough question. To each of you. What do you believe is the biggest misperception that the American people have about you as a man and a candidate? Using specific examples, can you take this opportunity to debunk that misperception and set us straight?

October 22, 2012

The Third Obama-Romney Presidential Debate

- The first question, and it concerns Libya. The controversy over what happened there continues. Four Americans are dead, including an American ambassador. Questions remain. What happened? What caused it? Was it spontaneous? Was it an intelligence failure? Was it a policy failure? Was there an attempt to mislead people about what really happened? Governor Romney, you said this was an example of an American policy in the Middle East that is unraveling before our very eyes. I'd like to hear each of you give your thoughts on that.
- Let me interject the second topic question in this segment about the Middle East and so on, and that is, you both mentioned -- alluded to this, and that is Syria. The war in Syria has now spilled over into Lebanon. We have, what, more than 100 people that were killed there in a bomb. There were demonstrations there, eight people dead. Mr. President, it's been more than a year since you saw -- you told Assad he had to go. Since then, 30,000 Syrians have died. We've had 300,000 refugees. The war goes on. He's still there. Should we reassess our policy and see if we can find a better way to influence events there? Or is that even possible?
- Governor, can I just ask you, would you go beyond what the administration would do, like for example, would you put in no-fly zones over Syria?
- May I ask you, you know, during the Egyptian turmoil, there came a point when you said it was time for President Mubarak to go. Some in your administration thought perhaps we should have waited a while on that. Do you have any regrets about that?
- Governor Romney, I want to hear your response to that, but I would just ask you, would you have stuck with Mubarak?
- ...you're going to get a chance to respond to that, because that's a perfect segue into our next segment, and that is, what is America's role in the world? And that is the question. What do each of you see as our role in the world, and I believe, Governor Romney, it's your chance to go first.
- Governor Romney, "wrong and reckless" policies?

- Governor, you say you want a bigger military. You want a bigger Navy. You don't want to cut defense spending. What I want to ask you -- we were talking about financial problems in this country. Where are you going to get the money?
- Would either of you -- and you'll have two minutes -- and, President Obama, you have the first go at this one -- would either of you be willing to declare that an attack on Israel is an attack on the United States, which, of course, is the same promise that we give to our close allies like Japan. And if you made such a declaration, would not that deter Iran? It's certainly deterred the Soviet Union for a long, long time when we made that -- we made -- we made that promise to our allies.
- Let me ask both of you, there -- as you know, there are reports that Iran and the United States a part of an international group, have agreed in principle to talks about Iran's nuclear program. What is the deal, if there are such talks? What is the deal that you would accept, Mr. President?
- What if -- what if the prime minister of Israel called you on the phone and said, "Our bombers are on the way. We're going to bomb Iran." What do you --
- So you'd say it just wouldn't happen?
- The United States is scheduled to turn over responsibility for security in Afghanistan to the Afghan government in 2014. At that point, we will withdraw our combat troops, leave a smaller force of Americans, if I understand our policy, in Afghanistan for training purposes. It seems to me the key question here is: What do you do if the deadline arrives and it is obvious the Afghans are unable to handle their security? Do we still leave?
- General Allen, our commander in Afghanistan, says that Americans continue to die at the hands of groups who are supported by Pakistan. We know that Pakistan has arrested the doctor who helped us catch Osama (sic) bin Laden. It still provides safe haven for terrorists, yet we continue to give Pakistan billions of dollars. Is it time for us to divorce Pakistan?
- Let -- let me ask you, Governor because we know President Obama's position on this, what is -- what is your position on the use of drones?
- Let's -- let's go to the next segment, because it's a very important one. It is the rise of China and future challenges for America. I want to just begin this by asking both of you, and Mr. President, you -- you go first this time. What do you believe is the greatest future threat to the national security of this country?
- Well, Governor, let me just ask you. If you declare them a currency manipulator on day one, some people are -- say you're just going to start a trade war with China on day one. Is that -- isn't there a risk that that could happen?

2016 United States Presidential and Vice Presidential Debate Questions:

September 26, 2016

The First Clinton-Trump Presidential Debate

- Why are you a better choice than your opponent to create the kinds of jobs that will put more money into the pockets of American workers?
- How are you going to bring back the industries that have left this country for cheaper labor overseas? How, specifically, are you going to tell American manufacturers that you have to come back?
- Secretary Clinton, you're calling for a tax increase on the wealthiest Americans. I'd like you to further defend that. And, Mr. Trump, you're calling for tax cuts for the wealthy. I'd like you to defend that.
- Mr. Trump, you have not released your tax returns...Don't Americans have a right to know if there are any conflicts of interest?
- Race has been a big issue in this campaign, and one of you is going to have to bridge a very wide and bitter gap. So how do you heal the divide?
- Secretary Clinton, last week, you said we've got to do everything possible to improve policing, to go right at implicit bias. Do you believe that police are implicitly biased against black people?
- Mr. Trump, for five years, you perpetuated a false claim that the nation's first black president was not a natural-born citizen. You questioned his legitimacy. In the last couple of weeks, you acknowledged what most Americans have accepted for years: The president was born in the United States. Can you tell us what took you so long?
- Our institutions are under cyber-attack, and our secrets are being stolen. So my question is, who's behind it? And how do we fight it?
- Tell us specifically how you would prevent homegrown attacks by American citizens.
- Why is your judgment -- why is your judgment any different than Mrs. Clinton's judgment?
- On nuclear weapons, President Obama reportedly considered changing the nation's longstanding policy on first use. Do you support the current policy?
- Mr. Trump, this year Secretary Clinton became the first woman nominated for president by a major party. Earlier this month, you said she doesn't have, quote, "a presidential look." She's standing here right now. What did you mean by that?

- One of you will not win this election. So my final question to you tonight, are you willing to accept the outcome as the will of the voters?

October 4, 2016

The Kaine-Pence Vice Presidential Debate

- I would like to start with the topic of presidential leadership. 28 years ago, tomorrow night, Lloyd Benson said, the vice presidential debate was not about the qualifications for the vice presidency, but about how if tragedy should occur, the vice president has to step in without any margin for error, without time for preparation, to take over the responsibility for the biggest job in the world. What about your qualities, your skills, and your temperament equip you to step into that role at a moment's notice? Senator Kaine?
- Senator Kaine, on the campaign trail, you praised Secretary Clinton's character, including her commitment to public service. Yet 60% of voters don't think she's trustworthy. Why do so many people distrust her? Is it because they have questions about her e-mails and the Clinton Foundation?
- Governor Pence, let me ask you, you have said that Donald Trump is thoughtful, compassionate, and steady. Yet 67% of voters feel that he is a risky choice, and 65% feel that he does not have the right kind of temperament to be president. Why do so many Americans think Mr. Trump is simply too erratic?
- But why the disconnect with your running mates?
- According to the nonpartisan committee for a responsible federal budget, neither of your economic plans will reduce the growing \$19 trillion gross national debt. In fact, your plans would add even more to it. Both of you were governors who balanced state budgets. Are you concerned that adding more to the debt could be disastrous for the country? Governor Pence?
- On that point, Governor Pence, recently "The New York Times" released part of Mr. Trump's 1995 tax return and reported that he could have avoided paying federal income taxes for years. Yesterday, Mr. Trump said he brilliantly used the laws to pay as little tax as legally possible. Does that seem fair to you?
- Senator Kaine, on the issue of social security, in 18 years when the social security trust funds run out of money, you'll be 76. The committee for responsible federal budget estimates your benefits could be cut by as much as \$7,500 per year. What would your administration do to prevent this cut?
- All right. Let me move on now to the issue of law enforcement and race relations. Law enforcement and race relations. After the Dallas police shooting, Police Chief David Brown said, "we asking cops to do too much in this country. Every societal failure, we put it off on the cops to solve. Not enough mental health funding, not enough drug addiction funding, schools fail, let's give it to the cops." Do

we ask too much of police officers in this country? And how would you specifically address the chief's concerns? Senator Kaine?

- Your fellow Republican, Governor Pence, Senator Tim Scott, who is African-American, recently spoke on the senate floor. He said he was stopped seven times by law enforcement in one year. He said, I have felt the anger, the frustration, the sadness, and the humiliation that comes with feeling like you're being targeted for nothing more than being just yourself. So what would you say to Senator Scott, Governor?
- All right. I want to turn to our next segment now, immigration. Your running mates have both said that undocumented immigrants who have committed violent crimes should be deported. What would you tell the millions of undocumented immigrants who have not committed violent crimes? Governor Pence?
- So Governor, how would these millions of undocumented immigrants leave? Would they be forcibly removed?
- Gentleman, I would like to shift to the idea of terrorism. Do you think the world today is a safer or more dangerous place than it was eight years ago. Has the terrorist threat increased or decreased? Senator Kaine?
- Governor Pence, Mr. Trump has proposed extreme vetting of immigrants from parts of the world that export terrorism, but that does not address many of the recent terrorist attacks in the United States such as the Orlando nightclub massacre, and the recent bombings in New York and New Jersey. Those were home-grown, committed by U.S. Citizens and legal residents. What specific tools would you use to prevent those kinds of attacks?
- Senator Kaine, let me ask you this, secretary Clinton has talked about an intelligence surge. What exactly would an intelligence surge look like and how would that help identify terrorists with no operational connection to a foreign terrorist organization?
- I want to turn now to Syria. 250,000 people, 100,000 of them children, are under siege in Aleppo, Syria. Bunker buster bombs, cluster munitions and incendiary weapons are being dropped on them by Russian and Syrian militaries. Does the U.S. have a responsibility to protect civilians and prevent mass casualties on this scale?
- Governor Pence you had mentioned no-fly zone. Where would you propose setting up a safe zone, specifically? How would you keep it safe?
- And exactly how would those safe zones work? How would they remain safe?

- Gentlemen, Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, annexed Crimea, and has provided crucial military support to the Assad regime. What steps, if any, would your administration take to counter these actions, Senator Kaine?
- Putin has quote no respect for Hillary Clinton and no respect for Obama. Why do you think he'll respect a Trump-Pence administration?
- Senator Kaine, what went wrong with the Russia reset?
- And what would do you differently?
- I'd like to ask now about North Korea, Iran and the threat of nuclear weapons. North Korea recently conducted its fifth and most powerful nuclear test. What specific steps would you take to prevent North Korea from developing a nuclear-armed missile capable of reaching the United States? Governor Pence?
- Senator Kaine, if you had intelligence North Korea was about to launch a missile, a nuclear-armed missile capable of reaching the United States, would you take preemptive action?
- All right. I'd like to turn to the next segment and in this I'd like that to focus social issues. You have both been open about the role that faith has played in your lives. Can you discuss in detail a time when you struggled to balance your personal faith and public policy position, Senator Kaine?
- I do have one final question for you both tonight. It has been a divisive campaign. Senator Kaine, if your ticket wins, what specifically are you going to do to unify the country and reassure the people who voted against you?

October 9, 2016

The Second Clinton-Trump Presidential Debate

- Citizen: knowing that educators assign viewing the presidential debates as students' homework, do you feel you're modeling appropriate and positive behavior for today's youth?
- We received a lot of questions online, Mr. Trump, about the tape that was released on Friday, as you can imagine. You called what you said locker room banter. You described kissing women without consent, grabbing their genitals. That is sexual assault. You bragged that you have sexually assaulted women. Do you understand that?
- Just for the record, though, are you saying that what you said on that bus 11 years ago that you did not actually kiss women without consent or grope women without consent?

- Jeff from Ohio asks on Facebook, “Trump says the campaign has changed him. When did that happen?” So, Mr. Trump, let me add to that. When you walked off that bus at age 59, were you a different man or did that behavior continue until just recently?
- Secretary Clinton, I do want to follow up on e- mails. You’ve said your handing of your e-mails was a mistake. You disagreed with FBI Director James Comey, calling your handling of classified information, quote, “extremely careless.” The FBI said that there were 110 classified e-mails that were exchanged, eight of which were top secret, and that it was possible hostile actors did gain access to those e-mails. You don’t call that extremely careless?
- Citizen: Affordable Care Act, known as Obamacare, it is not affordable. Premiums have gone up. Deductibles have gone up. Copays have gone up. Prescriptions have gone up. And the coverage has gone down. What will you do to bring the cost down and make coverage better?
- Secretary Clinton, your husband called Obamacare, quote, “the craziest thing in the world,” saying that small-business owners are getting killed as premiums double, coverage is cut in half. Was he mistaken or was the mistake simply telling the truth?
- Mr. Trump, you’ve said you want to end Obamacare. You’ve also said you want to make coverage accessible for people with pre-existing conditions. How do you force insurance companies to do that if you’re no longer mandating that every American get insurance?
- Are you going — are you going to have a mandate that Americans have to have health insurance?
- Citizen: There are 3.3 million Muslims in the United States, and I’m one of them. You’ve mentioned working with Muslim nations, but with Islamophobia on the rise, how will you help people like me deal with the consequences of being labeled as a threat to the country after the election is over?
- Mr. Trump, your running mate said this week that the Muslim ban is no longer your position. Is that correct? And if it is, was it a mistake to have a religious test?
- Secretary Clinton, let me ask you about that, because you have asked for an increase from 10,000 to 65,000 Syrian refugees. We know you want tougher vetting. That’s not a perfect system. So why take the risk of having those refugees come into the country?
- So, Tu, from Virginia asks, is it OK for politicians to be two-faced? Is it acceptable for a politician to have a private stance on issues?
- Citizen: what specific tax provisions will you change to ensure the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share in taxes?

- Mr. Trump, did you use that \$916 million loss to avoid paying personal federal income taxes for years? Can you say how many years you have avoided paying personal federal income taxes?
- Diane from Pennsylvania asks, if you were president, what would you do about Syria and the humanitarian crisis in Aleppo? Isn't it a lot like the Holocaust when the U.S. waited too long before we helped?
- What do you think will happen if Aleppo falls? Tell me what your strategy is.
- Would you introduce the threat of U.S. military force beyond a no-fly zone against the Assad regime to back up diplomacy?
- But what would you do differently than President Obama is doing?
- Citizen: my question is, do you believe you can be a devoted president to all the people in the United States?
- Secretary Clinton, you said that half of Donald Trump's supporters are, quote, "deplorables, racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic." You later said you regretted saying half. You didn't express regret for using the term "deplorables." To Mr. Carter's question, how can you unite a country if you've written off tens of millions of Americans?
- Mr. Trump...In the days after the first debate, you sent out a series of tweets from 3 a.m. to 5 a.m., including one that told people to check out a sex tape. Is that the discipline of a good leader?
- Secretary Clinton, does Mr. Trump have the discipline to be a good leader?
- Citizen: what would you prioritize as the most important aspect of selecting a Supreme Court justice?
- Citizen: what steps will your energy policy take to meet our energy needs, while at the same time remaining environmentally friendly and minimizing job loss for fossil power plant workers?
- Citizen: my question to both of you is, regardless of the current rhetoric, would either of you name one positive thing that you respect in one another?

October 19, 2016

The Third Clinton-Trump Presidential Debate

- First of all, where do you want to see the court take the country? And secondly, what's your view on how the Constitution should be interpreted? Do the founders' words mean what they say, or is it a living document to be applied flexibly according to changing circumstances?

- Secretary Clinton, you said last year, and let me quote, the Supreme Court is wrong on the Second Amendment. Now, in fact, in the 2008 *Heller* case, the court ruled that there is a constitutional right to bear arms but a right that is reasonably limited. Those were the words of Judge Antonin Scalia, who wrote the decision. What's wrong with that?
- How will you ensure the Second Amendment is protected? You just heard Secretary Clinton's answer. Does she persuade you that, while you may differ on regulation, that she supports a Second Amendment right to bear arms?
- Mr. Trump, you oppose any limits on assault weapons, any limits on magazines. You support a national right to carry law. Why, sir?
- Mr. Trump, you're pro-life. But I want to ask you specifically, do you want the court, including the justices that you will name, to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which includes, in fact states, a woman's right to abortion?
- I want to ask you, Secretary Clinton, how far you believe the right to abortion goes. You have been quoted as saying that the fetus has no constitutional rights. You also voted against a ban on late-term partial-birth abortions. Why?
- There is almost no issue that separates the two of you more than the issue of immigration... why are you right and your opponent wrong?
- Secretary Clinton, I want to clear up your position on this issue because in a speech you gave to a Brazilian bank for which you were paid \$225,000 we've learned from the Wikileaks that you said this and I want to quote, my dream is a hemispheric common market with open trade and open borders – is that your dream, open borders?
- The top national security officials of this country do believe that Russia is behind these hacks. Even if you don't know for sure whether they are, do you condemn any interference by Russia in the American election?
- Please explain to me why you think your plan will create more jobs and growth for this country and your opponent's plan will not.
- Secretary, you told me in July when we spoke that the problem is that president Obama didn't get to do enough in what he was trying to do with this stimulus. So is your plan basically even more of the Obama stimulus?
- Mr. Trump, even conservative economists who have looked at your plan say that the numbers don't add up, that your idea, and you've talked about 25 million jobs created, 4% growth is unrealistic. And they say you talk a lot about growing the energy industry. They say with oil prices as they are right now, that's unrealistic as well. Your response?

- Mr. Trump, at the last debate you said your talk about grabbing women was just that, talk, and that you had never actually done it. And since then, as we all know, nine women have come forward and said you either groped them or kissed them without their consent. Why would so many different women from so many different circumstances over so many different years, why would they all in this last couple of weeks make up -- you deny this. Why would they all make up these stories. And since this is a question for both of you, Secretary Clinton, Mr. Trump says what your husband did and that you defended was even worse.
- Secretary Clinton, during your 2009 senate confirmation hearing, you promised to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest with your dealing with the Clinton Foundation while you were secretary of state. But e-mails show that donors got special access to you. Can you really say you kept your pledge to that senate committee, and what happened and what went on between you and the Clinton Foundation – why isn't it what Mr. Trump calls pay to play?
- Wasn't some of the money used to settle your lawsuit, sir?
- Do you make the same commitment that you will absolutely, sir, that you will absolutely accept the result of this election?
- If we are able to push ISIS out of Mosul and out of Iraq, would you be willing to put US troops in there to prevent their return or something else?
- Mr. Trump, you said that ISIS — that Syria and Russia are busy fighting ISIS. In fact, they have been the ones who have been bombing and shelling eastern Aleppo. And they just announced a humanitarian pause, in effect admitting that they have been bombing and shelling Aleppo. Would you like to clear that up, sir?
- Secretary Clinton, you have said that you would impose a no-fly zone... President Obama has refused to do that because he fears it's going to draw us closer, deeper into the conflict. And General Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff there says you want to impose a no-fly zone, chances are you're going to get into a war, his words, with Syria and Russia. So the question I have, if you impose a no-fly zone, first of all, how do you respond to their concerns? Secondly, if you impose a no-fly zone and a Russian plane violates that, does president Putin shoot that plane down?
- In regards to the national debt...Secretary Clinton, under your plan, debt would rise to 86 percent of GDP over the next 10 years. Mr. Trump, under your plan, they say it would rise to 105 percent of GDP over the next 10 years. Question is, why are both of you ignoring this problem?
- Would you make a deal to save Medicare and Social Security that included both tax increases and benefit cuts in effect a grand bargain on entitlements?