

Text 2

LEHRER: Good evening, and welcome to the first of 3 debates among the major candidates for president of the US, sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates. The candidates are: independent candidate Ross Perot, Governor Bill Clinton, the Democratic nominee, and President George Bush, the Republican nominee. I am Jim Lehrer of the MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour on PBS, and I will be the moderator for this 90-minute event, which is taking place before an audience in the athletic complex on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Three journalists will be asking questions tonight. They are John Mashek of The Boston Globe, Ann Compton of ABC News, and Sander Vanocur, a freelance journalist. We will follow a format agreed to by representatives of the Clinton and Bush campaigns. That agreement contains no restrictions on the content or subject matter of the questions. Each candidate will have up to 2 minutes for a closing statement. The order of those, as well as the questioning, was determined by a drawing. The first question goes to Mr. Perot. He will have 2 minutes to answer, to be followed by rebuttals of one minute each from Governor Clinton and then President Bush. Gentlemen, good evening. The first topic tonight is what separates each of you from the other. Mr. Perot, what do you believe tonight is the singlemost important separating issue of this campaign?