



2024 United States presidential debates

The **2024 United States presidential debates** are a series of debates held before the 2024 presidential election. The first general election debate between the major candidates was sponsored by CNN and attended by then-presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden and presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump on June 27, 2024. A second debate took place between Trump and Kamala Harris on September 10, 2024.

Biden performed poorly during the first debate, with many commentators and Democrats calling for him to drop out of the race. Biden withdrew his bid for re-election on July 21. Trump and Kamala Harris debated on September 10 on ABC. It was widely reported that Harris won that debate. The two campaigns have agreed that a vice presidential debate, which will be sponsored by CBS, will be held on October 1.

Four general election debates sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) were originally scheduled to be held between September 16 and October 9, 2024. Both Biden and Trump opposed the CPD's debate format and schedule.^{[1][2]} In May 2024, both campaigns agreed to bypass the CPD and hold the alternative debates, canceling the CPD debates.

Background

Commission on Presidential Debates

In April 2022, the Republican National Committee (RNC) voted unanimously to withdraw from the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD); committee chair Ronna McDaniel called the organization "biased" and stated that they would find "newer, better debate platforms" for future

2024 United States presidential debates



First 2024 United States presidential debate

June 27, 2024



Nominee	<u>Joe Biden</u> (presumptive)	<u>Donald Trump</u> (presumptive)
Party	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Republican</u>
Home state	<u>Delaware</u>	<u>Florida</u>

Second 2024 United States presidential debate

September 10, 2024^[a]



Nominee	<u>Kamala Harris</u> ^[b]	<u>Donald Trump</u>
Party	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Republican</u>
Home state	<u>California</u>	<u>Florida</u>

2024 United States vice presidential debate

October 1, 2024

Republican nominees.^[3] This announcement came after years of tension between the organizations, including a threat made earlier in the year by the RNC to change its rules to prohibit nominees from participating in CPD debates. In response, the commission stated that "[its] plans for 2024 will be based on fairness, neutrality and a firm commitment to help the American public learn about the candidates and the issues".^[4]

Former president Donald Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination, did not attend any primary debates, describing them as unnecessary to his campaign and claiming unfair treatment by organizers.^[5] He has previously accused the CPD of unfair treatment in the 2016 and 2020 debates. Despite this, Trump told Fox News host Bret Baier in a June 2023 interview that he was interested in debating incumbent president Joe Biden should he become the Democratic nominee. At that time, Biden had not committed to attending the debate either, as his campaign was also in conflict with the commission for failing to enforce its rules against Trump,^[6] though in April 2024 he confirmed he planned to debate Trump.^[7]



Nominee	<u>Tim Walz</u>	<u>JD Vance</u>
Party	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Republican</u>
Home state	<u>Minnesota</u>	<u>Ohio</u>

Biden and Trump became the presumptive nominees of their respective parties in March 2024,^{[8][9]} setting up the first presidential rematch since 1956.^[10] On April 14, 2024, a number of major news organizations signed an open letter to the presumptive nominees urging them to attend the debates, arguing for its "rich tradition in our American democracy" and that the "exceptionally high" stakes require debates to be held. Signatories include ABC News, CBS News, CNN, NBC News, and Fox News, among others.^[11]

If either major party nominee chooses not to attend a general election debate, it would be the second consecutive time its happened, the first being the 2020 debates, when President Trump refused to attend the second debate with Biden because it would have been virtual rather than in person following Trump's COVID-19 diagnosis.^[12] It previously occurred in 1980, when President Jimmy Carter refused to attend the first debate with Ronald Reagan due to the presence of independent candidate John B. Anderson.

Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles, campaign managers for Trump, had pushed for more debates to be held by the CPD, in addition to holding them earlier than the planned September date, though the commission refused to accede.^[13] Throughout his 2024 campaign, Trump confirmed his intention to cooperate with the CPD repeatedly and challenged Biden to debate "anywhere, anytime, anyplace".^[14]

The CPD announced the schedule for its four debates on November 20, 2023. All debates would have started at 9 p.m. ET and would have run for 90 minutes uninterrupted.^[15] In order to qualify for the CPD-sponsored debates, presidential candidates would have needed to meet the following criteria: (vice presidential candidates would have qualified by being the running mate of a qualifying presidential candidate)^[15]

- Be constitutionally eligible to hold the presidency.
- Appear on a sufficient number of ballots to have a mathematical possibility of winning a majority vote in the Electoral College.

- Have a level of support of at least 15% of the national electorate as determined by five national public opinion polling organizations selected by the commission, using the average of those organizations' most recently reported results at the time of determination.

On June 24, 2024, the CPD announced that it was releasing the sites it had selected for its 2024 debates from their contracts, adding that "CPD stands ready to sponsor 2024 debates should circumstances change."^[16]

Biden–Trump alternative debates

On May 15, 2024, the Biden campaign announced that it would not participate in the CPD-hosted debates and instead invited Trump to participate in two alternative debates to take place in June and September, each hosted in a TV news studio without an audience.^{[17][18]} Jen O'Malley Dillon, the Biden campaign manager, laid out three reasons for sidelining the CPD, indicating that the debates were not completed until early voting started, that the debates had become "a spectacle" and that the CPD could not "enforce its own rules".^[19] Frank Fahrenkopf, the head of the CPD, pushed back against the claims in an interview with Politico, indicating that the September 16 debate date was the best date, as the "key date" to secure ballot access for independents is September 6. Fahrenkopf also noted that the general election debates are "not like the primary debates" and that Trump himself had not followed the debate rules during the 2020 general election debate moderated by Chris Wallace.^[20] Biden and Trump accepted an offer from CNN to hold the first of these debates on June 27 and from ABC to hold the second on September 10.^[21]

Trump indicated the same day that he had accepted a Fox News debate to be hosted on October 2, 2024, though the Biden campaign dismissed the prospect of a third debate.^[22] Robert F. Kennedy Jr. accused the two candidates of colluding to exclude him from televised debates "because they are afraid I would win"; both CNN and ABC had decided on eligibility criteria that were similar to those that had been used by the CPD, with Kennedy not appearing on a sufficient number of state ballots at that time.^[23] The Biden campaign had unsuccessfully proposed that third-party candidates be excluded from the debates.^[21] A May poll taken by the Harvard Center for American Political Studies/Harris indicated that 71% of the people surveyed were in favor of allowing a third-party candidate to debate.^[24] Kennedy's campaign filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission, maintaining that neither Biden nor Trump meet the ballot access threshold as they have not been nominated by their parties.^[25]

Trump announced on May 17 that he would be willing to hold another debate with Biden that would be hosted by NBC News and Telemundo.^[26]

On July 9, Trump challenged Biden to a debate with no moderators that would be done that week, as well as an 18-hole golf match.^[27]

Debate list

2024 United States presidential election debates							
No.	Date and time	Host	Location	Moderators	Participants		
<div>Key:</div> <div><div>P</div> Participant <div>I</div> Invitee <div>A</div> Absent <div>W</div> Withdrawn</div> <div><div>N/A</div> Not Applicable</div>					<div></div> <div>President Joe Biden of Delaware</div>	<div></div> <div>Vice President Kamala Harris of California</div>	<div></div> <div>President Donald Trump of Florida</div>
<div>1</div>	Thursday, June 27, 2024 9:00 p.m. EDT ^[28]	<div>CNN</div>	<div>Atlanta, Georgia</div>	<div>Jake Tapper, Dana Bash^[29]</div>	<div>P</div>	<div>N/A</div>	<div>P</div>
<div>2</div>	Tuesday, September 10, 2024 ^[21] 9:00 p.m. EDT ^[30]	<div>ABC</div>	<div>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania^[31]</div>	<div>David Muir, Linsey Davis^[32]</div>	<div>W</div>	<div>P</div>	<div>P</div>
<div>-</div>	Monday, September 16, 2024 9:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. EDT^[15]	<div>Texas State University</div>	<div>San Marcos, Texas</div>	<div>Canceled</div>			
<div>-</div>	Tuesday, October 1, 2024 9:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. EDT^[15]	<div>Virginia State University</div>	<div>Petersburg, Virginia</div>	<div>Canceled</div>			
<div>-</div>	Wednesday, October 9, 2024 9:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. EDT^[15]	<div>University of Utah</div>	<div>Salt Lake City, Utah</div>	<div>Canceled</div>			

2024 United States vice presidential election debate							
No.	Date and time	Host	Location	Moderator	Participants		
Key: P Participant I Invitee A Absent N/A Not Applicable					Vice President Kamala Harris of <u>California</u>	Governor Tim Walz of <u>Minnesota</u>	Senator JD Vance of <u>Ohio</u>
-	Wednesday, September 25, 2024 9:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. EDT^[15]	Lafayette College	Easton, Pennsylvania	Canceled			
VP	Tuesday, October 1, 2024 ^[33]	<u>CBS</u> ^[34]	New York City, <u>New York</u>	Margaret Brennan, Norah O'Donnell	N/A	I	I

June 27: First presidential debate (CNN, Atlanta)

The first presidential debate, which was the only one in which Biden participated before he dropped out, was held on Thursday, June 27, 2024, at 9:00 p.m. EDT in CNN's studios at the Techwood Turner campus in Atlanta, Georgia.

Prelude

In April 2024, ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, and Fox News prepared a letter to the Biden and Trump campaigns, after concerns that the Biden campaign would fault the Commission on Presidential Debates for failing to enforce its rules against Trump and over uncertainty regarding Trump's presence. Trump did not appear at a scheduled debate in November 2020 or debates for the Republican primaries.^[37] The networks issued their statement with the Associated Press, C-SPAN, NewsNation, NPR, PBS NewsHour, USA Today, and Noticias Univision.^{[38][c]} On May 15, Biden and Trump agreed to debate on June 27 with CNN and on September 10 with ABC News.^[39] The arrangement did not include the Commission on Presidential Debates, a non-profit corporation that had sponsored debates for every presidential election since 1988.^[40]

In the months prior to the debate, Trump said Biden is the "worst debater I have ever faced; he can't put two sentences together" and criticized his performance in the latest State of the Union address. However, in the days before the debate, Trump starkly shifted his rhetoric regarding Biden's debating skills in an

First presidential debate	
Date(s)	June 27, 2024
Duration	90 minutes ^[35]
Venue	Techwood Turner Campus, Studio D ^[36]
Location	<u>Atlanta, Georgia</u>
Participants	<u>Joe Biden</u> (presumptive) <u>Donald Trump</u> (presumptive)
Footage	<u>CNN on Youtube</u> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-v-8wJkmwBY)
Moderator(s)	<u>Jake Tapper</u> and <u>Dana Bash</u> of <u>CNN</u>
Transcript	Transcript on CNN (https://www.cnn.com/2024/06/27/politics/read-biden-trump-debate-rush-transcript/index.html)

attempt to increase expectations for Biden, saying "I'm not underestimating him... I assume he's going to be somebody that will be a worthy debater."^[41]

Qualifications

Though Trump told Scripps News he would have no objection to independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s appearance in the debate, the Biden campaign wrote in a memo that Kennedy should be excluded.^[42] As part of the requirements, the Kennedy campaign needed to garner at least fifteen percent support in four approved polls by June 20 and appear on a sufficient number of ballots to be capable of winning the election; the Kennedy campaign's strategy of delaying appearances on ballots to prevent legal challenges from mounting conflicted with CNN's requirements.^[43] On May 29, Kennedy filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission alleging that the Biden and Trump campaigns colluded to prevent him from appearing at the debate.^[44]

In order to qualify for the June 27 CNN debate, presidential candidates had to meet the following criteria:^[45]

- Be constitutionally eligible to hold the presidency
- File with the Federal Election Commission
- Appear on a sufficient number of ballots to have a mathematical possibility of winning a majority vote in the Electoral College
- Agree to the rules of the debate
- Have a level of support of at least 15% of the national electorate as determined by four national public opinion polling organizations selected by CNN, with such polls dating between March 13 and June 20, 2024.

17 polls met CNN's criteria, with Biden and Trump meeting the 15% threshold in every poll while Kennedy Jr. met the threshold in three, peaking at 16%. Both West and Stein peaked at 4% support, and Oliver peaked at 1% support. No other candidate was included in any qualifying polls.^[46]

Qualified candidates for the first debate				
Candidate	Met polling criterion ^[46]	Met EV criteria	Met both criteria/ invited	Refs
<u>Biden</u>	Yes 17 qualifying polls	Yes 538 EVs certified ^[d]	Yes	^[47]
<u>Trump</u>	Yes 17 qualifying polls	Yes 538 EVs certified ^[e]	Yes	^[47]
<u>Oliver</u>	No 0 qualifying polls	Yes 337 EVs certified ^{[f][g]}	No	
<u>Kennedy</u>	No 3 qualifying polls	No 139 EVs certified ^{[h][i]}	No	^{[63][64][65][66]}
<u>Stein</u>	No 0 qualifying polls	No 263 EVs certified ^[j]	No	^[68]
<u>West</u>	No 0 qualifying polls	No 39 EVs certified ^[k]	No	

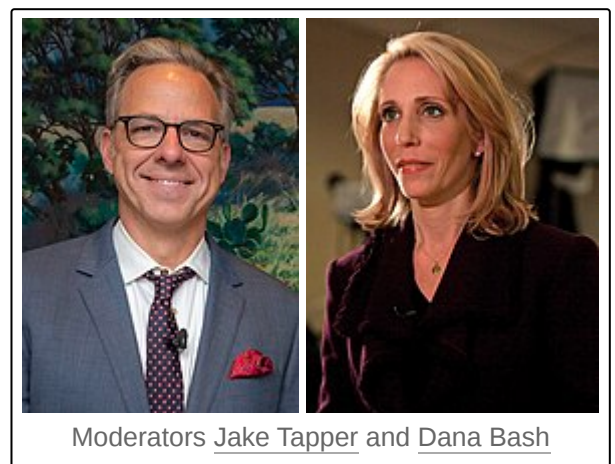
Preparations

The Biden campaign hired Ron Klain, Biden's former chief of staff, to assist him in debating Trump; Klain helped Biden during the 2020 presidential debates.^[75] White House deputy chief of staff Bruce Reed collected material on policy contrasts with Trump.^[76] Biden engaged in preparations at Camp David, arriving there on the night of June 20 and remained there nearly until the debate.^[77]

According to political advisor Marc Lotter, Trump "views his rallies as debate prep" and engaged with limited debate preparation. The Trump campaign did not appoint a Biden stand-in for Trump to debate.^[76] At a rally in Racine, Wisconsin, Trump suggested Biden would be a formidable opponent, alleging Biden would be on cocaine and that the moderators would assist him.^[78]

Format

The first debate was available on multiple platforms, including CNN, as well as "CNN International, CNN en Español, CNN Max and CNN.com"^[79] and was simulcast on CBS News, ABC News, Fox News, NewsNation, PBS, C-SPAN, MSNBC and NBC,^[80] as well as The Washington Post's website,^[81] and The New York Times's website.^[82] In contrast to previous debates, CNN decided that most reporters covering the event would not be allowed into the studio while the debate was occurring and would need to watch footage from McCamish Pavilion.^[83] The move was criticized by the White House Correspondents' Association, with its president Kelly O'Donnell stating that the lack of press access "diminishes a core principle of presidential coverage".^[84]



Moderators Jake Tapper and Dana Bash

The debate ran for 90 minutes,^[85] with no audience members present. Trump's and Biden's microphones were only turned on when it was their turn to speak (in response to the events of the September 29, 2020, presidential debate).^[86] Debate rules written by CNN allocated two minutes for answering the question posed by the moderators, Dana Bash and Jake Tapper, and one minute for rebuttals and responses to the rebuttals.^[76] The primary issues of the debate were immigration, the economy and inflation, abortion, foreign policy and the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, legal issues of the participants, Social Security, the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, and the participants' ages.^[87]

Debate

The moderators asked 20 questions, excluding the closing. Four questions centered on the economy, four on democracy, three on foreign policy, two on immigration, two on abortion, and one each for climate change, age, opioids, race, and tax reform.^[88] Biden walked with stiff, short strides as he was introduced onto the stage.^{[89][90][91]} Moderator Jake Tapper began the debate with inflation figures.^[92] Biden spoke in a hoarse, rapid whisper, attributing the state of the economy to Trump's presidency.^{[93][91]} Trump rebutted by falsely claiming he built the "greatest economy in the history of our country" before the COVID-19 pandemic.^[94] Trump claimed that Biden supported the job growth of illegal immigrants,^[95] defending his ten percent tariff,^[96] and criticized the 2020–2021 U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.^[97] He argued that Biden began his term with successes from the Trump presidency, but chose to implement negative reform.^[98] After a question regarding the national debt, Biden trailed off and appeared to lose his train of thought, saying: "Making sure that we're able to make every single solitary person eligible for what I've been able to deal with ... the COVID ... Excuse me, with dealing with everything we have to do with ... look ... if we finally beat Medicare."^{[99][100]} While Trump was talking, Biden often stared unblinking into the distance with his mouth agape.^{[101][102]} On illegal border crossings, Biden said, "I'm going to continue to move until we get to total ban — on the total initiative relative to what we're going to do with more border patrol and more asylum officers." Trump responded, "I really don't know what he said at the end of that sentence. I don't think he knows what he said either."^{[103][104]} At one point, Trump and Biden briefly had an argument over golfing abilities during a question regarding their fitness as president due to age.^[105]

Trump spoke more than Biden in the debate, with CNN reporting the former to have spoken 40 minutes and 12 seconds, and the latter 35 minutes and 41 seconds.^[106] Trump went off topic about 50% of the time, while Biden went off topic about 30% of the time during the debate.^[88] During the debate, Trump and Biden both used personal attacks against each other.^[107] Trump described Biden as "a very bad Palestinian", using the word "Palestinian" in a derogatory way, which Al Jazeera, The New Arab, and Mother Jones described as a form of anti-Palestinian racism.^[108] NBC News found that Trump made 106 attacks during the debate, while Biden made 72.^[88]


Fact-checking

The moderators did not fact check the candidates,^[109] and The New York Times reported that Trump made many "misleading attacks" and false statements. Biden struggled to respond and appeared shaky, with The New York Times describing his performance as "meandering and mumbling".^[110] Numerous news outlets also mentioned lies and falsehoods,^[1] and fact-checked the candidates.^[116]

Glenn Kessler, fact-checker for *The Washington Post*, summarized "35 of the most noteworthy claims that initially caught our interest", claims which he analyzed in depth.^[117] [FactCheck.org](#) summarized its coverage of the many false and inaccurate claims made by the candidates, which were also analyzed.^[118] The [Associated Press](#) also analyzed a number of false claims.^[119]

Viewership

 Broadcast networks

 Cable news networks

CNN reported that 47.9 million people watched the first debate, down from 73 million viewers during the first 2020 presidential debate. *Nielsen Media Research* later reported the number of viewers at 51.3 million;^[120] this does not include individuals who watched the debate through social media, streaming services, or listened through radio.^[121]

Network	Viewers
CNN	9,530,000
Fox News	9,276,000
ABC	9,210,000
NBC	5,390,000
CBS	5,011,000
MSNBC	4,122,000
Fox	3,677,000
Fox Business	397,000


Reception and aftermath

Overview

Trump was declared the winner of the debate by columnists from *The Hill*,^[122] [CNN](#),^[123] *Politico*,^[124] *The New York Times*,^[125] *USA Today*,^[126] *Business Insider*,^[127] and *Vox*.^[128] Columnists from [MSNBC](#),^[129] *The Cook Political Report*,^[130] *The Guardian*,^[131] and the *Los Angeles Times* argued that while Trump did not win the debate, Biden "clearly lost".^[132]

According to a CNN flash poll, 67% of text message respondents believed Trump won the debate, while 33% felt Biden won.^[133] A *YouGov* poll conducted the following morning had 43% of respondents listing Trump as the debate winner, compared to 22% for Biden, while 35% were unsure.^[134] A poll from *Ipsos* and *FiveThirtyEight* found that 60% believed Trump won, versus 21% that said Biden won. That poll found that, among the viewers, the debate did not significantly change support for either candidate, though Biden slightly lost support while Trump marginally gained support.^[135] A poll by Morning Consult released on June 28 indicated that 60% of voters were in favor of replacing Biden.^[136] *Amy Walter*, the editor of *The Cook Political Report*, said that while Biden's poor performance stunned "Democratic elite types", many voters had already "priced this in".^[130] According to *Crowdtangle*, "most of the top 10 most-liked posts on Instagram about the debate were either pretty neutral or emphasized how bad it was for both campaigns. ... And on *TikTok*, there was also a universal vibe that both candidates, not just Biden, were less than ideal for the moment."^[137]

Reporters in the *spin room* after the debate ignored Trump representatives as they asked Biden's team to explain the president's performance. The Trump campaign received only a few media requests the next morning—compared to the typical about two dozen, and far more after previous debates—as reporters continued focusing on Biden.^[138] "No one was more shocked at Biden's performance than Donald Trump", an advisor told the *Washington Post*. The candidate reportedly told aides that he could not even look at

Debate winner			
Outlet	Trump	Biden	Not sure
CNN	67%	33%	
YouGov	43%	22%	35%
Ipsos/538	60%	21%	19%

Biden.^[139] Following the debate, CNN reported criticism of Biden's performance by some Democrats, with one Democratic strategist dubbing it a "disaster" and another as "nothing good".^{[106][140]} Media sources described Biden's voice as "hoarse" and "raspy",^{[141][142]} and described him as frequently losing his train of thought and having meandering answers, with many citing his "We finally beat Medicare" response to a question on the national debt as emblematic of this.^{[143][112][144]} Susan Glasser of *The New Yorker* described it as the worst televised presidential debate ever, edging out the first 2020 presidential debate between the two men, with Biden's weak performance overshadowing Trump's falsehoods.^[114]

American writer and political consultant Tim Miller called Biden's performance the "worst performance in the history of televised presidential debates",^[145] a sentiment also shared by Jeff Greenfield of *Politico*^[124] and NewsNation chief political analyst Chris Stirewalt.^[146] Journalist Jake Sherman reported that several congressional Democrats thought that Biden "didn't even clear the lowest bar", and that Biden was not even able to articulate what his policies are even if they agreed on them.^[145] Some Democrats were unsure whether he should continue his campaign and be the Democratic nominee.^{[147][144]} CNN's chief national correspondent John King reported that there was "a deep, a wide, and a very aggressive panic" in the Democratic Party that started a few minutes into the debate. During the debate, unnamed elected officials, party strategists, and fundraisers were reported to have discussed replacing Biden as the party's candidate due to fears about him potentially hurting other Democrats' public perceptions, and deciding if prominent Democrats should make a public statement about asking Biden to step down.^[148]

After being deemed ineligible, Kennedy counterprogrammed the debate with a campaign event from Los Angeles dubbed "The Real Debate", moderated by John Stossel, in which he provided his own responses to the questions that were posed to Biden and Trump during the actual debate. The event was live streamed on Rumble and X; on X, Kennedy's stream began with roughly 618,000 viewers, and peaked at over five million.^{[149][150][151]}

The day after the debate, Biden admitted that his debate performance was weak,^{[152][153]} and his performance led to an increase in questions as to whether or not he should remain as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate.^{[154][155]} The editorial board of *The New York Times* called for Biden to exit the presidential race, stating there are other "Democratic leaders better equipped to present clear, compelling and energetic alternatives to a second Trump presidency" and that "the burden rests on the Democratic Party to put the interests of the nation above the ambitions of a single man".^[156] In response to the debate, *Time* magazine published the cover for their forthcoming August 5 issue, featuring Biden walking off-cover, captioned simply with "Panic." The magazine wrote, "[it] is not a word too strong to describe sentiment that spreads throughout the Democratic Party from top to bottom during the debate."^[157] The magazine also published an article written by Caroline Randall Williams calling on Biden to do "the historic thing" and step down. Williams noted many of Biden's historic achievements, writing that it would be his greatest to allow another candidate to run.^[158] The Democratic Party announced it brought in \$14 million on June 27 and throughout the early morning of June 28, with the 11 p.m. to 12 a.m. hour after the debate accounting for the "single best hour of fundraising since the campaign's launch in April 2023." The Trump campaign announced receiving \$8 million on debate day.^[137] Biden spoke about his debate performance on July 2 and claimed that his "foreign travel" beforehand caused it.^[159]

Democratic Party response



About an hour into the debate, a Biden aide and others familiar with his situation claimed that Biden had a cold.^[141] He had been administered a COVID-19 test during his stay at Camp David, which was negative.^[115] Biden attended a debate watch party shortly after the debate, where it was reported that he energetically thanked his supporters, calling them the reason why America is as good as it is. A CBS host stated that his demeanor made it appear like "his cold has been cured".^[145]

President Biden stated to reporters at a Waffle House after the debate: "I think we did well" and said he did not have any concerns about his performance or calls for him to drop out of the presidential race, stating that it was difficult to debate "a liar."^[111] Biden was congratulated by his wife, First Lady Jill Biden, on his performance at a post-debate gathering. She told him on stage that he did "such a great job. You answered every question."^[160] Biden's running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris, claimed that while Biden "started off slow", he still managed to have a strong finish.^[161] Biden-Harris 2024 campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon praised Biden's debate performance, saying that he presented a "positive and winning vision" for the future.^[162]

California Governor Gavin Newsom stated that moments where Biden stumbled upon his words were "significantly insignificant" due to American voters not supporting Trump policies on issues such as abortion, saying Biden won the debate "on substance". He said that the American people need to have Biden's back instead of turning on him "at this critical time" because of one performance.^[162] Pennsylvania Democratic Senator John Fetterman, who had a similarly weak debate performance in his 2022 election, told fellow Democrats to "Chill the fuck out", stating that he refused to join the "Democratic vultures on Biden's shoulder".^[163] Several other prominent Democrats, including former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, rallied behind Biden, and resisted calls for him to step down due to one "bad debate."^[164]

Other associates of Biden were more critical, with political advisor Kate Bedingfield stating that there was no way to interpret his debate performance as good, and political consultant David Axelrod saying that it seemed that Biden panicked early in the debate, which "confirmed people's fears".^[165] Democratic strategist Van Jones said that Biden had failed a test to restore the confidence of the country, and that the reaction for many supporters was "not just panic, it's pain".^[113] Former Democratic presidential candidate Julian Castro called the results of the debate "completely predictable", and that Biden failed to clear a very low bar by seeming unprepared, lost, and not strong enough to resist Trump's attacks or lies.^[113]

Because of the debate's unusually early schedule, Congress was still in session. Reporters swarmed Democratic members, asking them to comment on Biden's performance. About half avoided commenting, Tom Suozzi of New York even boarding an elevator going in the wrong direction, and another allegedly faking a phone call. Others acknowledged that Biden performed poorly but still endorsed him. Jared

"I know I'm not a young man, to state the obvious. I don't walk as easily as I used to. I don't talk as smoothly as I used to. I don't debate as well as I used to, but I know what I do know: I know how to tell the truth. I know right from wrong. And I know how to do this job, I know how to get things done. And I know what millions of Americans know: When you get knocked down, you get back up."

—Joe Biden, responding to criticism of his debate performance during a speech in North Carolina the following day (June 28, 2024).^{[152][137]}

Huffman of California and Greg Landsman of Ohio were among those who publicly said they were unsure whether Biden should be the nominee.^[166] Jared Golden of Maine and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington both stated they believed that Biden would lose the election.^{[167][168]}

International response

Chinese journalist and former Global Times editor Hu Xijin said the debate was "very entertaining for many Chinese people".^[169] The debate was a trending topic on microblogging website Weibo, where users noted Biden's age. Trump's tie was compared to the red scarves worn by young communist revolutionaries; Trump has been referred to as a "nation-builder" (建国) in China for ostensibly allowing China to ascend in global affairs.^[170] Israeli newspaper Haaretz and British tabloid The Sun criticized Biden's performance, and statements made by German politician Norbert Röttgen and former British ambassador to the United States Kim Darroch also expressed concern.^[169] Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski commented on X that Biden should now manage a succession plan.^[171] Many European allies were extremely concerned with the debate, while Russian state media mocked Biden's performance.^[171]

Calls for President Biden to drop out

Democrats such as Julian Castro and Dean Phillips had hurt their careers for publicly saying that Biden was too old before the debate,^[166] but immediately following the debate, some in the party began calling for President Biden to drop out of the presidential race. Democratic strategist James Carville and former 2020 Democratic presidential primary candidate Andrew Yang were the first notable Democrats to make those calls.^{[172][173]} On July 2, U.S. Congressman Lloyd Doggett of Texas became the first Democrat in Congress to publicly call for Biden to step aside as the party's nominee.^[174] He was joined by various Congressmembers in the following days. On July 7, four more House Democrats called for Biden to exit the race during a private call, including Adam Smith, Jerry Nadler, Mark Takano, and Joe Morelle.^[175] Smith went on the record the following day and called for Biden to withdraw.^[176]

Biden stated in an ABC News interview with George Stephanopoulos on July 5 that he would not end his candidacy.^[177] The president again refused to drop out on July 8. That day Biden appeared on Morning Joe on MSNBC by telephone, advising the "elites in the party" against his nomination to "run against me. Announce for president. Challenge me at the convention". He sent a letter to Congressional Democrats before Morning Joe explaining his decision, stating that "The question of how to move forward has been well-aired for over a week now. And it's time for it to end".^[178] In an attempt to show voters and Democratic politicians that he was capable of facing Donald Trump in the 2024 election, he held a solo press conference on July 11, 2024, following the NATO 2024 Washington summit.^[179]

Biden suspended his re-election campaign on July 21, 2024, and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris.^[180]

September 10: Second presidential debate (ABC, Philadelphia)

Second presidential debate

Date(s)	September 10, 2024
Duration	90 minutes

The second presidential debate was held on Tuesday, September 10, 2024, at 9:00 p.m. EDT at the [National Constitution Center](#) in [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#).

Prelude

The Biden and Trump campaigns had agreed to a September 10 debate hosted by ABC, but after Biden suspended his re-election campaign, it became unclear whether Trump would debate a new rival candidate.^[181] In late July, after Harris secured enough support to become the presumptive nominee, Trump said he would debate her repeatedly, though he said he preferred not to do so on ABC.^[182] Fox News extended invitations to Harris and Trump for a proposed debate to place on September 17 in Pennsylvania.^[183] Harris indicated on July 25 she was willing to debate Trump on ABC.^[184] Trump's communications director, [Steven Cheung](#), remarked the same day that the Trump campaign would not

commit to any debate until the Democratic Party formally nominated its candidate.^[185] On August 2, Trump stated that the planned September 10 debate (hosted by [ABC News](#)) would be "terminated" since Biden would no longer be a participant and instead he had "agreed with Fox News" to a September 4 debate with a live audience, which Harris declined.^{[186][187][188][189]} In an August 8 press conference, Trump announced he would rejoin the September 10 debate, though he made it contingent on Harris agreeing to two other proposed debates, stating that if Harris only agrees to the ABC debate, "I don't know how that's gonna work out. We'd like to do three debates."^{[190][191][192]} As of August 8, the Harris and Trump campaigns were holding "active discussions" with [NBC](#) over the potential September 25 debate.^[193]

Harris and Trump have verbally sparred over attending the debates.^{[188][194]} On August 15, the Harris campaign said a second debate would be contingent on Trump "actually showing up" to the September 10 debate.^[195] On August 27, Trump recommitted to the September 10 debate.^[196]

Qualifications

In order to qualify for the September 10 ABC debate, presidential candidates needed to meet the following criteria:^[197]

- Be [constitutionally eligible](#) to hold the presidency
- File with the [Federal Election Commission](#)
- Appear on a sufficient number of ballots to have a mathematical possibility of winning a majority vote in the [Electoral College](#)
- Agree to the rules of the debate
- Have a level of support of at least 15% in four national public polls of registered or likely voters selected by ABC, with such polls dating between August 1 and September 3, 2024.

Harris and Trump were invited to the debate in early August.^[198]

Venue	National Constitution Center
Location	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Participants	Kamala Harris Donald Trump
Footage	NBC on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vhc_nE-qQJk)
Moderator(s)	David Muir and Linsey Davis of ABC News
Transcript	Transcript on ABC (https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/harris-trump-presidential-debate-transcript/story?id=113560542)
Fact checking	Fact checking (https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/fact-checking-kamala-harris-donald-trumps-1st-presidential/story?id=113567997)

Five polls met ABC's criteria for inclusion, with Harris and Trump meeting the 15% threshold in every poll. Kennedy peaked at 6% in a Fox News poll. West, Stein, and Oliver all peaked at 1% support, and no other candidate was tested.^[46]

Qualified candidates for the second debate				
Candidate	Meets polling criterion ^[46]	Meets EV criteria	Meets both criteria/invited	Refs
<u>Harris</u>	Yes 5 qualifying polls	Yes 538 EVs	Yes	^[199]
<u>Trump</u>	Yes 5 qualifying polls	Yes 538 EVs	Yes	^[199]
<u>Oliver</u>	No 0 qualifying polls	Yes 461 EVs	No	
<u>Stein</u>	No 0 qualifying polls	Yes 396 EVs	No	
<u>West</u>	No 0 qualifying polls	No 141 EVs	No	
<u>Kennedy</u>	No 0 qualifying polls	Yes 287 EVs ^[m]	No	
<div><div></div> Withdrawn candidate</div>				

Preparations

Harris prepared for the debate in Pittsburgh. Karen Dunn and Rohini Kosoglu were in charge of the preparations and Philippe Reines played Trump.^[200]

Trump prepared for the debate with a small team of advisers, including Matt Gaetz and Tulsi Gabbard.^[201]

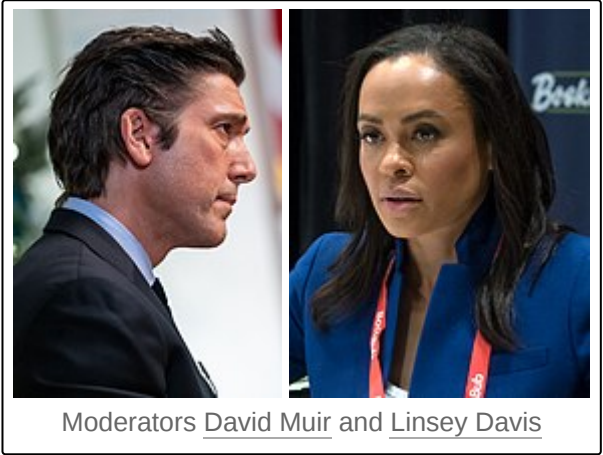
Format

The debate was hosted on ABC, ABC News Live,^[202] Disney+ and Hulu, and was simulcast on CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, NBC News and other networks.^[203]

The debate rules remained the same as the one prior, with no audience being present and muted microphones.^[204]

Debate

At the start of the debate, Trump moved behind his lectern, but Harris approached him and extended her hand, surprising many who did not expect such an interaction between the two.^{[205][206]} It was the first handshake in a presidential debate in eight years.^[207]



In the hours leading up to the debate, social media was flooded with reports of baseless allegations—echoed by JD Vance,^{[208][209]} Trump's running mate—that Haitian migrants in Springfield, Ohio, were stealing and eating pets. Despite city officials stating there were no credible reports to substantiate these claims, Trump raised the issue during the debate. He said: "In Springfield, they're eating the dogs. The people that came in, they're eating the cats. They're eating—they're eating the pets of the people that live there." Harris laughed and shook her head as Trump made those statements.^{[210][211][212]}

Harris spent most of the debate facing her opponent directly, frequently smirking, laughing openly, or shaking her head in disbelief as he responded to questions. Meanwhile, the split screen revealed Trump mostly looking straight ahead when she spoke, occasionally shaking his head and smirking.^{[188][213]}

Harris accused Trump of repeatedly exploiting the issue of race to "divide the American people". The remark came after a question from the moderators about a July remark in which he said Harris "became a Black person".^[214]

Trump argued that the Biden administration had "destroyed" the country, and falsely^[215] labelled Harris a "Marxist"^[216] and tried to portray Harris as a "radical liberal". He claimed: "She has a plan to defund the police. She has a plan to confiscate everyone's guns." Harris responded, stating: "Tim Walz and I are both gun owners. We're not taking anybody's guns away."^[207] Trump remarked, "Remember this, she is Biden." Harris responded: "Clearly, I am not Joe Biden."^{[217][218]}

Harris invited people to attend a Trump rally and observe the crowd. "People start leaving his rallies early out of exhaustion and boredom," she said. Trump responded by saying: "People don't go to her rallies. There's no reason to go. And the people that do go, she's busing them in and paying them to be there."^[219]

Some of Harris's sharpest criticisms of Trump occurred during their clash over abortion rights, a key issue for Democrats since the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022 with Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization. Harris said: "One does not have to abandon their faith or deeply held beliefs to agree the government—and Donald Trump, certainly—should not be telling a woman what to do with her body." She said she would restore women's rights to what they were under Roe, and Trump responded that she would not have the votes necessary in Congress. Trump supported the Dobbs decision to have each state decide whether to ban abortion, but did not answer whether he would veto a hypothetical bill to ban abortion nationwide.^[220]

Trump claimed that Harris supported "defunding the police", prompting Harris to interject with "That's not true" into her muted mic. In response to this perceived interruption, Trump lashed out at Harris with the line "I'm talking now (...) Does that sound familiar?", a reference to Harris's notable "I'm speaking" line from the 2020 vice presidential debate with Mike Pence.^[221]

Trump heavily criticized the Affordable Care Act, though he claimed to have "saved" it. When asked if he had a plan of how to replace the act, Trump claimed he had "concepts of a plan".^{[222][223]}

When moderators questioned him about any regrets regarding the January 6 Capitol attack, he denied responsibility and redirected the conversation to Black Lives Matter protests. He blamed then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi for not accepting his alleged offer of sending the National Guard, a power delegated exclusively to the president. He initially used "we" when referring to the insurrectionists and then pivoted, saying: "This group of people that has been treated so bad."^{[224][225]}

Trump was repeatedly asked if he wanted Ukraine to win its war against Russia and if it was in the best interests of the U.S. for Kyiv to achieve victory. He did not address the question directly, stating instead that he wants the war to end in order to save lives. Harris told Trump, "[Putin] would eat you for lunch" and claimed that if he was president when Russia invaded Ukraine, "Putin would be sitting in Kyiv right now." She alleged that Trump's claim that the war would be over in 24 hours was based on the idea that he would simply concede to Putin.^[226]

Fact-checking

The moderators were tasked with fact-checking the candidates during the debate, and multiple news outlets did so as well.^{[227][228][229]} Sky News host Andrew Bolt claimed that the moderators failed to fact-check Harris.^[230]

When Trump repeated the debunked allegation that immigrants in Springfield were eating pets, the moderator David Muir responded that there had been no credible reports of pets being harmed. Trump countered by claiming he had seen TV interviews where people said their dogs had been taken and eaten.^[231] Trump claimed that there was virtually no inflation during his presidency. However, inflation actually rose 6% during his first 42 months in office.^[232] Trump claimed that some babies were being subjected to "executions" after birth. Davis intervened to fact-check him, stating: "There is no state in this country where it is legal to kill a baby after it's born."^[233] Trump also said that "A lot of these illegal immigrants coming in, [Democrats] are trying to get them to vote"; however, it is illegal for noncitizens to vote in federal elections.^[234]

Harris also made some misleading and false claims during the debate, including that Trump left the succeeding administration with "the worst unemployment since the Great Depression."^[235] Harris also falsely stated that "there is not one member of the United States military who is an active duty in a combat zone", with the United States military's Central Command shortly thereafter issuing a statement that it had engaged various Houthi targets in Yemen within the past 24 hours.^{[236][237]}

Viewership

Nielsen Media Research reported that 60.3 million viewers across ABC, NBC, CBS, MSNBC, Fox and CNN, watched the debate,^{[238][239]} up from 51.3 million viewers during the June 27 presidential debate between Biden and Trump; this does not include individuals who watched the debate through social media, streaming services, or listened through radio. The viewership increased to 67.1 viewers following the finalization of ratings.^[240]

Reception and aftermath

Harris was declared the winner of the debate by columnists from CNN,^[241] Politico,^[242] The New York Times,^[243] USA Today,^[244] Business Insider,^[245] Vox,^[246] The Guardian,^[247] MSNBC,^[248] and the Los Angeles Times.^[249]

According to a CNN flash poll, 63% of text message respondents believed Harris won the debate, while 37% felt Trump won.^[250] A poll from YouGov showed 43% of respondents saying that Harris won, 28% saying that Trump won, and 30% unsure.^[251] A poll from Reuters and Ipsos showed 53% of respondents saying that Harris won, as opposed to 24% saying that Trump won.^[252]

According to [Amy Walter](#), editor of the nonpartisan *The Cook Political Report*, Harris won the debate by successfully turning it into a referendum on Trump, while Trump did not make a consistent or compelling case against Harris.^[253]

Muir and Davis's fact-checking approach to the debate received criticism from Republicans, who alleged they fact-checked and interrupted Trump excessively while not doing the same to Harris.^{[254][255][256]} Trump echoed those complaints and suggested [ABC News](#) should lose its license.^[257] Other journalists and Republican pollster [Frank Luntz](#) praised their moderation.^[258]

Trump received criticism from conservative commentators and lawmakers for what was described as “taking the bait” on comments Harris made regarding crowds at his rallies.^[259] Trump's campaign strategists had urged him to emphasize in the debates that he was a "changed man" who had survived an [assassination attempt](#) and would unite [America](#), but they believed he had been unable to do so.^[260]

Many of Trump's statements during the debate, such as "They're eating the dogs ... they're eating the cats ... they're eating the pets", "execution after birth", "transgender operations on illegal aliens in prison", "Abdul ... the head of the Taliban", and "I have concepts of a plan" became viral Internet memes in its aftermath, as did Harris's facial expressions in response to Trump's statements.^{[261][262][263][264][265][266]}

At one point, while criticizing Trump over inviting the [Taliban](#) to [Camp David](#) and the deal that would eventually lead to the [Afghan withdrawal](#), Harris referred to Trump as "this former president", pausing between "this" and "former president". In media coverage of the debate, some commentators drew attention to the pause, suggesting that Harris was avoiding using an insult or an expletive.^{[267][268][269]}

Harris campaign chair [Jen O'Malley Dillon](#) called for a second debate to be held sometime in October. Initially, Trump was non-committal, saying he would be "less inclined to" debate Harris a second time, but indicating he would "think about it".^{[270][271][272]} On September 12, Trump announced that he was not in favor of a third debate, with Harris.^[273]

After the debate, polls showed [Harris](#) still had a hard time conveying the perception that she would represent a “change” in policy, due to her being a part of the [Biden administration](#).^{[274][275]}

October 1: Vice presidential debate (CBS, New York City)

After [Biden's withdrawal](#) on July 21, 2024, doubt was cast over the vice presidential debate, as Harris began her own campaign for the presidency.^[277] Republican vice presidential candidate [JD Vance](#) expressed annoyance at losing the opportunity to debate Harris,^[278] but has since expressed interest in debating



A [Voice of America](#) video covering early reactions to the debate

Debate winner			
Outlet	Harris	Trump	Not sure
CNN	63%	37%	—
YouGov	43%	28%	30%
Reuters/Ipsos	53%	24%	24%

Vice presidential debate	
Date(s)	October 1, 2024
Location	New York City , New York ^[276]
Participants	Tim Walz JD Vance

Democratic vice presidential nominee Tim Walz. Walz spoke in favor of debating Vance the day after Walz was selected as the Democratic vice presidential nominee.^[279]

On August 14, CBS offered four dates for a vice presidential debate: September 17 and 24 and October 1 and 8.^[280] Walz was the first to agree to an October 1 debate that same day,^[281] with Vance agreeing to the date the following day.^[282]

The vice presidential debate is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, in New York City, New York.^[283]

Moderator(s) Margaret Brennan and Norah O'Donnell of CBS



Moderators Margaret Brennan and Norah O'Donnell

Format

The debate will be hosted on CBS.^[283]

Other proposed debates

Proposed RFK Jr. vs Trump debate

On May 7, 2024, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. issued an open letter challenging former President Trump to debate him at the Libertarian National Convention, where both were already scheduled to speak from May 24–25, citing Trump's frequent and vocal claims that he would be willing to debate anywhere and Kennedy's own competitive polling with both major candidates. Trump did not respond to this challenge.^[284]

Proposed Harris–Vance debate

A vice presidential debate in July was initially proposed, which would have taken place after the selection of a vice presidential candidate at the 2024 Republican National Convention.^[28] The Biden campaign agreed to a vice presidential debate hosted by CBS News to take place on either July 23 or August 13.^[285] The Trump campaign confirmed with *Politico* that it was aware of the offer, but had not yet made a decision.^[286] Trump stated on May 17 he agreed to a vice presidential debate on behalf of his future vice presidential pick. Bret Baier of Fox News stated in an interview with Martha MacCallum held on May 17 that Fox would be willing to host a vice presidential debate on July 23, August 13, or "following both party conventions".^[26]

Following the selection of U.S. Senator JD Vance as the Republican vice presidential nominee, vice president Kamala Harris had left Vance a voicemail on July 15 to congratulate him on his nomination. They spoke the following day, though terms for the debate were still under discussion.^[287] Vance rejected the call for a vice presidential debate, citing concerns over Biden's status as the presumptive Democratic nominee being in doubt following the first presidential debate.^[277]

Minor debates and forums

Various debates and forums have been held, sponsored by the [Free & Equal Elections Foundation](#).

See also

- [Free & Equal Elections Foundation](#)
- [2024 Democratic Party presidential debates and forums](#)
- [2024 Republican Party presidential debates and forums](#)

Notes

- The Biden and Trump campaigns both agreed to a September 10 debate prior to [Biden's withdrawing](#) from the race.
- Joe Biden [withdrew himself](#) from the election on July 21 and endorsed Kamala Harris who became the Democratic nominee thereafter.
- In a statement to *[The New York Times](#)*, [Newsmax](#) stated it agreed with the letter, but was not an official signatory.^[38]
- as presumptive Democratic nominee
- as presumptive Republican nominee

f. ^[48]

- Alaska (3)
- Arkansas (6)
- Arizona (11)
- California (54)
- Connecticut (7)
- Delaware (3)
- Florida (30)
- Georgia (16)
- Hawaii (4)
- Idaho (4)
- Indiana (11)
- Iowa (6)
- Kansas (6)
- Louisiana (8)
- Maine (4)
- Maryland (10)
- Michigan (15)
- Mississippi (6)
- Missouri (10)
- Nebraska (5)
- Nevada (6)
- North Carolina (16)
- North Dakota (3)
- Oklahoma (7)
- Oregon (8)
- South Carolina (9)
- South Dakota (3)
- Texas (40)
- Utah (6)
- Vermont (3)
- West Virginia (4)
- Wisconsin (10)
- Wyoming (3)

g. Some news outlets included the following four states in Oliver's total which are not included here for the following reasons: Two state party affiliates rejected Oliver as the party's nominee

- Colorado (10)^[49]
- Montana (4)^[50]

Two state party affiliates disaffiliated with the party to form the Liberal Party in 2022^[51]

- Massachusetts (11)
- New Mexico (5)

- h.
 - California (54)^[52]
 - Delaware (3)^[53]
 - Florida (30)^{[54][55]}
 - Hawaii (4)^{[56][57]}
 - Michigan (15)^[48]
 - Oklahoma (7)^[58]
 - South Carolina (9)^[59]
 - Tennessee (11)^[55]
 - Utah (6)^{[60][61]}
- i. The Kennedy campaign also claimed they were certified for the ballot in two other states, but these claims were not verified by independent media outlets:^[55]
- Mississippi (6)^[62]
 - Texas (40)^[62]

Even if these states were included in CNN's tally, Kennedy would have still failed to meet the 270 electoral vote requirement by June 20.

- j. ^[48] All but Idaho as presumptive Green Party nominee

- Arizona (11)
- Arkansas (6)
- California (54)
- Colorado (10)
- Washington, D.C. (3)
- Florida (30)
- Hawaii (4)
- Idaho (4) (as independent)
- Louisiana (8)
- Maine (4)
- Michigan (15)
- Mississippi (24)
- Montana (4)
- Nevada (6)^[67]
- New Mexico (5)
- North Carolina (16)
- Oregon (8)
- South Carolina (9)
- Texas (40)
- Utah (6)
- West Virginia (4)
- Wisconsin (10)

- k. ■ Alaska (3, as Aurora Party)^[69]
■ Colorado (10, as Unity Party)^[70]
■ Oregon (8, as Progressive Party)^[71]
■ South Carolina (9, as United Citizens Party)^{[72][73]}
■ Utah (6)^[48]
■ Vermont (3, as Green Mountain Peace and Justice Party)^[74]
- l. Lies and falsehoods^{[111][112][113][114][107][110][115][116]}
- m. Kennedy also withdrew his name from the ballot in 11 states totaling 171 additional electoral votes

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