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What is the format of tonight's debate

Copyright © 2021 ABC News Internet Ventures. All rights reserved. Mega The lone vice presidential debate of the 2020 election season is Wednesday, pitting incumbent Mike Pence against California Sen. Kamala Harris in a nationally televised event at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. The debate begins at 9 p.m. ET/6 p.m. PT and will air live on ABC, CBS, CNN, C-Span, Fox News, NBC and PBS stations nationwide along with the cable news networks, the Spanish-language broadcasters and their respective platforms. It will also be available on The Roku Channel, Newsy, Xumo TV and other digital outlets. The event will run 90 minutes and be commercial-free. You can also watch the livestream on Deadline here: The debate will be moderated by USA Today Washington bureau chief Susan Page and be broken into nine segments of about 10 minutes each. In the format, Page will ask an opening question, after which the candidates will have two minutes to respond. A deeper discussion of the topic will follow. It's unlikely that tonight's debate will be as unruly as the much-discussed first Donald Trump-Joe Biden debate on September 29 in Cleveland. An estimated 73.1 million across the same 16 networks watched as moderator Chris Wallace battled interruptions and cross-talk. The Commission on Presidential Debates, which organizes the debates, promised "additional structure" will be added to the format of the remaining debates to ensure a more orderly discussion of the issues." Still, that Debate 1 viewership drew 73.1 million viewers, he third highest total for a presidential debate in the past 45 years, after 2016's first debate between Trump and Hillary Clinton (84 million) and 1980's Ronald Reagan-Jimmy Carter matchup (80.6 million). The debate stage at the University of Utah Julio Cortez/AP Images Much has happened in the week since, leading with Trump, his wife Melania and several White House aides and administration officials contracting COVID-19. Trump spent four days at Walter Reed Medical Center before returning Tuesday (and saying he was ready for the next presidential debate October 15 in Miami). Pence, who has since tested negative for the virus most recently Tuesday, and Harris will see extra precautions on the VP debate stage tonight; there will be (after a day of back-and-forth) a plexiglass barrier between the candidates, and the podiums will be positioned 13 feet away from each other, rather than the previously decided 7 feet away. Page will also be behind a plexiglass barrier, and organizers in Utah said an audience is planned for the event, which will require that anyone with access to the perimeter be tested, and that attendees to wear masks. Related Deadline Video: Subscribe to Deadline Breaking News Alerts and keep your inbox happy. The commission that oversees the general election presidential debates said Wednesday it will be making changes to the format of the remaining two debates. One key change it plans to implement: Cutting off the microphones of President Trump and Joe Biden if they break the rules, according to a source familiar with the commission's deliberations. The plans have not been finalized and the commission is still considering how it would carry out the plan. The Commission on Presidential Debates is responding to Tuesday's face-off between President Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democratic presidential nominee, which was marred by frequent interruptions by the president and mud-slinging. In a statement following the presidential debate in Cleveland, Ohio, the first of three scheduled in the run-up to the general election, the commission said the event "made clear that additional structure should be added to the format of the remaining debates to ensure a more orderly discussion of the issues." The organization said, "The CPD will be carefully considering the changes that it will adopt and will announce those measures shortly," adding, "The Commission is grateful to Chris Wallace for the professionalism and skill he brought to last night's debate and intends to ensure that additional tools to maintain order are in place for the remaining debates."An informed source told CBS News Evening News anchor and managing editor Norah O'Donnell the commission will spend the next 48 hours determining new guidelines and rules for the second debate. The organization is working on all possible solutions, but the source said that "we are going to be making changes." At the top of the list is controlling the two candidates' microphones and their ability to interrupt one another and the moderator. The campaigns will be informed of the rules, but the source said the rules will not be subject to negotiation. For the next debate, which is a town hall, there will be only 15-20 people in the hall asking questions. Tim Murtaugh, communications director for the Trump campaign, criticized the commission for the forthcoming measures. "They're only doing this because their guy got pummeled last night," he said in a statement. "President Trump was the dominant force and now Joe Biden is trying to work the refs. They shouldn't be moving the goalposts and changing the rules in the middle of the game." Kate Bedingfield, deputy campaign manager for Biden's campaign, said the former vice president is ready for the next contest in Miami. "He'll be focused on answering questions from the voters there, under whatever set of rules the Commission develops to try to contain Donald Trump's behavior," she said in a statement. "The president will have to choose between responding to voters about questions for which he has offered no answers in this campaign -- or repeating last night's uninged meltdown."Tuesday night's debate was broken into six 15-minute segments on specific topics. Each candidate was supposed to have two minutes to speak at the beginning of each segment, with the remainder of the time up for grabs. But CBS News digital reporter Melissa Quinn reports it quickly spiraled into chaos as moderator and "Fox News Sunday" host Chris Wallace attempted to press the two candidates on issues including the coronavirus crisis, the Supreme Court and the economy. His efforts to restore order to the debate, however, were made more difficult by Mr. Trump's frequent interruptions of both Biden and Wallace, and policy discussions were drowned out by name-calling and personal attacks leveled by both presidential candidates. Biden called Mr. Trump the "worst president America has ever had," a "clown" and told him to "shut up," while the president made unfounded claims about the Democratic presidential nominee's son, Hunter Biden, told the former vice president "there's nothing smart about you" and refused to categorically denounce white supremacists. The chaos of the first debate raised questions as to the effectiveness of the additional two scheduled for October. The second presidential debate is slated for October 15 in Miami, followed by the third and final debate set for October 22 in Nashville.FROM THE CANDIDATESTRUMP-PENCE CAMPAIGNMr. Trump faced multiple questions on Wednesday about white supremacy groups because on Tuesday in response to an opportunity to denounce far-right support during the first presidential debate, Mr. Trump told the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by." In response to reporters on the South Lawn Wednesday who asked him to condemn the groups, Mr. Trump said, "I've always denounced any form. Any form. Any form of any of that you have to denounce." CBS News digital reporter Melissa Quinn reports that shortly after Mr. Trump's statement on Tuesday during the debate, the Proud Boys' Telegram channel, members boasted of Mr. Trump's reaction. They used "stand back" and "stand by" in the logo and posted videos from the debate with the caption "God. Family. Brotherhood." More BIDEN-HARRIS CAMPAIGNJoe Biden is calling President Donald Trump's performance at the first presidential debate a "national embarrassment," blasting the president for not having plans to lead the country going forward. CBS News campaign reporter Bo Erickson reports Biden, on a six-stop train tour through Ohio and Pennsylvania, also rebuked the president telling the far-right group "the Proud Boys" to "stand back and stand by."Biden said his message to groups who tout white supremacy is "cease and desist." Since last night, both Biden and his campaign have committed to attend the two next debates in October. A Biden campaign source told CBS News they are pleased with the candidate's debate performance, noting his ability to speak directly to camera, address the Coronavirus, and brush off personal attacks about him and his sons. CBS News political correspondent Ed O'Keefe also reports that the Democratic campaign said they raised nearly \$10 million from more than 215,000 individual donors during a three-hour period on debate night. The big haul included money from 60,000 new donors, the Biden campaign says. Late Tuesday the campaign had revealed that it raised \$3.8 million between 10 and 11 p.m. ET, its best single hour of online fundraising ever. A Democratic-backed voter registration site, IWillVote.com, also saw a spike in activity with nearly 100,000 new signups to volunteer to help register Americans during the debate. The Biden campaign says the site saw most of its activity from three key battleground states -- Florida, Pennsylvania and North CarolinaBATTLEGROUND IN THE BATTLEGROUNDSONHIO - *STARK COUNTY*Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden stopped in Alliance, Ohio Wednesday, which is mostly located in Stark County, as part of his train tour through eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, reports CBS News campaign reporter Jack Turman.Biden pitched his economic message in Alliance, which is home to some manufacturing companies. The former VP's stop in Stark County comes as he tries to cut into President Trump's support in rural areas in the state. A CBS News Battleground Tracker poll of Ohio from July showed that 50% of registered Ohio voters said the economic condition of the country is bad. The same poll showed that 50% of registered of Ohio voters said that Trump's policies would be helping with economic recovery, compared to 42% who said Biden's economic policies would help with economic recovery. Former President Barack Obama narrowly carried Stark County in 2012, but President Trump performed well there in 2016, beating Hillary Clinton by 17 points.ISSUES THAT MATTERDEBATE REACTIONIn a post-debate CBS News survey, voters who tuned into the first presidential match-up said Former Vice President Joe Biden won, but overwhelmingly called the debate "annoying." Forty-eight percent said Biden won the night, while 41% thought President Donald Trump came out victorious. Just 17% of voters who watched found the debate informative, while a whopping 69% came away feeling annoyed. Trump supporters standing in line outside the president's rally in Duluth, MN Wednesday shared in that annoyance. "There was a lot of interrupting going on between both candidates," Finnegan O'Dell of Pine River, MN told CBS News campaign reporter Nicole Sganga. Nearby, loyal Trump support Christy Abraham issued her full support to the president's re-election, but conceded she tuned off the TV. "Both of them were interrupting each other a lot. And it's like, just let each other talk," Abraham offered. "They were bashing each other. It started to get annoying." Trump supporter Christine Christianson of Milaca, MN noted, "It's like, let each other speak. Finish your sentences."Andrew Unger of Chaska, MN told CBS News he was not surprised by the president's aggressive approach to Tuesday Night's debate. "We know that's his style. He got elected on that style." Across battleground states, undecided voters who supported the president in 2016, looked for answers on the debate stage that never came."It didn't clarify anything for my wife or myself," Russ DeJulio of Mount Lebanon, PA told CBS News. "We're still looking at both candidates. I need to hear more about their economic plans."Diane Brainard of Eagle River, WI felt both candidates behaved "childishly" and said she'd hoped to hear more about voting integrity ahead of November's election. "The constant interrupting was very distracting."Former Marine Ed Privé of Franclin, NH summed up the presidential race way: "We're all sitting in this firefight. But it's you and I who are going to pay the price." He sighed. "I'm just so discouraged by this." POLL WATCHINGAt the first presidential debate Tuesday evening, President Trump encouraged his supporters to monitor Election Day polling places for instances of fraud -- a federal crime. "I am encouraging my supporters to go into the polls and watch very carefully, because that's what has to happen -- I am urging them to do it," Mr. Trump said during the chaotic inaugural debate held in Cleveland, Ohio. The president continued, "There was a big problem, in Philadelphia they went in to watch, they're called poll watchers, very safe very nice thing -- they were thrown out, they weren't allowed to watch," he said, adding, "You know why? Because bad things happen in Philadelphia, bad things." Poll watchers are observers who are typically paid workers of a government organization -- such as state parties, the Republican National Committee, the Democratic National Committee -- who observe polling places for potential issues.CBS News campaign reporter Cara Korto says every state has different parameters, but watchers usually must be registered to vote in whatever state or county in which they're operating. Watchers are not official election personnel who are in any way part of administering an election. They act in the capacity of helping to safeguard voting, making sure that everything runs smoothly. A poll watcher, for example, can notify election officials of issues such as long lines, or a lack of poll officials at a site. The president's call to supporters is different than calling for certified poll watchers.ON THE \$\$\$CAMPAIGN CASHIt's the final day of the month, and that means inboxes are being bombarded by fundraising emails.With just over 30 days until the election, CBS News political unit associate producer Sarah Ewall-Wice reports federal candidates are facing a fundraising deadline -- the final one they need to report with the Federal Election Commission before Election Day.For presidential candidates, it's the end of the monthly filing period; for congressional candidates and others, it's the final day of the third quarter. Since midnight, President Trump has sent out at least 10 fundraising emails to supporters asking for contributions including ones promising an 800%-match. His campaign also touted the president's debate performance. Meanwhile, Joe Biden also sent out a fundraising email noting tonight's midnight deadline and his own first debate against the president. After smashing the monthly fundraising record in August, it's hard to imagine the Biden campaign breaking its own record, but across the board, Democrats have been fundraising furiously over the course of September.Last night, the Biden campaign announced it had its best hour of online fundraising to date, bringing in \$3.8 million from 10pm to 11pm. The Democratic National Committee also had its best online fundraising hour ever from 11pm to midnight.Earlier this month, ActBlue, the platform used by Democrats to raise funds online, announced it broke its daily and hourly fundraising records in September after the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Since news of her death broke the evening of September 18, ActBlue has brought in more than \$435 million including nearly a quarter of a billion dollars of it that came in within a week. In the 12 hours after the first presidential debate wrapped up on Tuesday, ActBlue brought in roughly \$12 million.While Republicans have also been fundraising off the Supreme Court vacancy and debate, their online platform does not publicly track money raised in the same way. Some campaigns will likely tout their cash hauls in the days to come, others may wait until the filing deadlines to share how much money they have heading into the final stretch.The presidential candidates and national parties have their monthly filing deadline with the FEC on October 20. Congressional candidates, and the presidential candidates joint fundraising committees have a quarterly filing deadline halfway through the month -- there may be some eye-popping numbers that come out.STATE-BY-STATEMICHIGANA Michigan Court of Claims judge ruled today that the GOP-controlled legislature can intervene as defendants in a case that extended Michigan's absentee ballot deadline by 14 days, reports CBS News campaign reporter Adam Brewster.Judge Cynthia Stephens ruled earlier this month that ballots that arrive by November 17 should be counted if they are postmarked by November 2. Ballots are normally due when polls close on Election Day. Stephens is also allowing third parties to turn in absentee ballots starting October 30 at 5:01 p.m. Michigan's Democratic Attorney General declined to appeal the decision. The ruling today opens the door for the GOP legislative leaders to appeal Stephens' ruling. PENNSYLVANIAThe Trump campaign is threatening to sue if Philadelphia elections officials don't let poll watchers into election offices where voters can receive and return mail ballots early. In a letter dated Tuesday, a lawyer for the campaign wrote that the Pennsylvania law that permits poll watchers extends to satellite elections offices, where voters can register to vote, apply for a mail ballot, fill out the ballot and return it in a single trip.Elections officials in Philadelphia opened over a half dozen such locations Tuesday. They refused to allow Trump staffers inside, saying the offices don't qualify as polling locations and therefore aren't governed by the law mandating poll watchers be allowed at polling places. The campaign will take legal action if Philadelphia's commissioners don't change their position by Wednesday, wrote Philadelphia lawyer Linda Kerns in the letter.Meanwhile, CBS News campaign reporter Zak Hudak reports that in the GOP-controlled state legislature of Pennsylvania, Republicans have taken the first step to creating a watchdog group Democrats say would undermine election integrity.Garth Everett, the chairman of the state House committee that deals with election rules, introduced a resolution Wednesday that would create a standing House committee with subpoena power to investigate the election. Governor Tom Wolf, a Democrat, bashed the proposal as a partisan move to undermine public trust in the election and take power away from the State Department and local elections officials."The House Republicans are not only walking in lockstep with President Trump to try to sow chaos and put the results of the election in question, they are also taking steps to take the authority to administer elections away from the Department of State," he said in a statement. But Pennsylvania House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff said that the state's highest court's decisions on several election issues made the creation of such a committee necessary."Given that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's election law changes raise serious questions about the security and integrity of our upcoming election, the House Select Committee on Election Integrity is an integral measure that ensures the Legislature can continue to exercise its constitutional prerogative and act as a check on this hijacked process," he said. The House is likely to hear amendments to the resolution tomorrow. Kevin Boyle, the Democratic ranking member on the House state government committee, has introduced a half dozen amendments, including one that would push to keep the committee from interfering with the officials' handling of the election.WISCONSINThe chair of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, Andrew Hitt, sent a letter to election officials in Milwaukee warning against having players or mascots from the Milwaukee Brewers and Bucks on site during early in-person absentee voting at their stadiums, according to CBS News campaign reporter Adam Brewster. Miller Park, home to the Brewers, and the Fiserv Forum, home to the bucks, will serve as early in-person absentee voting sites during the general election. Hitt's letter says that having players or mascots on site would be an issue because that would be "something of significant value" that would influence a voter to "go to or refrain from going to the polls." The letter says, "If players or mascots were to be present at Miller Park or Fiserv Forum between October 20 and November 1 while they are in use as alternate absentee ballot sites, we believe that would constitute electioneering within the meaning of Wis. Stat. § 12.03(2). That statute provides that '[n]o person may engage in electioneering in the municipal clerk's office or at an alternate site under s. 6.85 during the hours that absentee ballots may be cast.'"Hitt goes on to say that "our election code contemplates that no one at an alternate absentee ballot site will engage in any activity the effect of which is to encourage electors to come to the site, vote in a particular race, or favor one candidate over another." In a statement to CBS News, Tyler Barnes, senior vice president of communications for the Brewers said, "We are aware of the letter, but we have no plans to have players or mascots present." The Bucks declined to comment.Also in Wisconsin the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request from Republicans in the state to put the extended absentee ballot deadline back on hold, according to CBS News campaign reporter Adam Brewster.Republicans had asked the 7th Circuit to stay the ruling while the judges waited for an answer from the Wisconsin Supreme Court about whether Republicans have standing in the case. Yesterday, the panel of judges, all appointed by Republicans, ruled that Republicans didn't have standing and therefore allowed the extended deadline set by a lower federal court to take effect. That judge ruled that ballots should count if they are postmarked by November 3 and arrive by November 9. Today's decision keeps that extended deadline in place, even though ballots are usually due by the time polls close on Election Day.CONGRESSIONAL COVERAGEIN THE HOUSERepublican Congresswoman Jamie Herrera Butler, who represents the part of Washington state closest to Portland, tweeted, "Last night's debate was the worst I've ever seen."She was unhappy that the president didn't disavow white supremacists clearly enough and said, "Let me state unequivocally that all of us must reject white supremacy in all its forms and violence by anyone for any reason." After writing in former Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan on her 2016 ballot, Herrera Beutler signaled in August she'd vote for Mr. Trump this cycle. Democrat freshman Elissa Slotkin of Michigan has usually been selective when critiquing Trump, since she represents a district he won by almost 7 points. But in the hours following the debate, she released a statement calling Trump's refusal to condemn the Proud Boys "one of the lowest points in the history of the presidency." CBS News political unit broadcast associate Aaron Navarro says Slotkin has previously brought up the presence of the Proud Boys in the Southern Michigan district during her own debates, criticizing her opponent, Republican Paul Junge, for not saying enough to condemn them.In other House news, the chamber unanimously adopted a resolution Tuesday afternoon to support a peaceful transfer of power for the presidency. The resolution reads that the House "reaffirms its commitment to the orderly and peaceful transfer of power" and that "there should be no disruptions by the president or any person in power to overturn the will of the people of the United States." The vote count was 397 "yes" votes to 5 "no" votes, with all the "no" votes coming from Republicans in safely red seats (except Congressman Steve King, who was ousted in his primary earlier this year).GOVERNOR'S MANSIONVIRGINIAVirginia Delegate Jennifer Carroll Foy, a Democratic 2021 gubernatorial candidate for the state, said she took "grave offense" to Mr. Trump's refusal to clearly denounce white supremacy and the "Proud Boys" group at the debate."If you don't condemn them, then you condone them," Foy told CBS News political unit broadcast associate Aaron Navarro. "It's very clear, the reasonable bar for any person seeking office or just being a decent human being, is to denounce neo-Nazis and white supremacists. It's not a difficult task."Foy, who aims to become the first black woman in the country to serve as governor, said she was initially surprised the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville came up but thought it was appropriate to recognize it. "What I wish would've happened is we talked about ways to do better, and how to really address it... and unfortunately Trump used it as a weapon in his arsenal in order to mobilize his group of neo-Nazis and white supremacists," she said.TRANSITION OF POWEREleven Democrat governors released a joint statement condemning Mr. Trump for not committing to a potential peaceful transition of power."Any efforts to throw out ballots or refuse a peaceful transfer of power are nothing less than an assault on American democracy," wrote the governors of Washington, Oregon, California, New Jersey, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Virginia, Delaware, Nevada and New Mexico. In their letter, Navarro says they affirmed that all ballots cast in "accordance with state and local laws" must be counted and that they "will not allow anyone to willfully corrupt the democratic process by delegitimizing the outcome or appointing fraudulent electors against the will of the voters." The governor's wrote, "And if the outcome of this election means the end of a presidency, he must leave office -- period."

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