The 2020 Presidential Debates

The Commission on Presidential Debates
Case Western Reserve University & Cleveland Clinic

Cleveland, Ohio
The Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) was established in 1987 after two formal studies recommended the creation of a permanent, independent general election debate sponsor. Its primary purpose is to sponsor and produce debates for the United States presidential and vice presidential candidates and to undertake research and educational activities relating to the debates. The organization, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) corporation, has sponsored all of the presidential debates since 1988.

Co-Chairs
Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr.
Dorothy S. Ridings
Kenneth Wollack

Honorary Co-Chairs
Gerald R. Ford*
Jimmy Carter
Ronald Reagan*
George W. Bush
Barack Obama

Co-Chair Emeritus
Paul G. Kirk, Jr.

Board of Directors
John C. Danforth
Charles Gibson
John Griffen
Yvonne Hao
Jane Harman
Antonia Hernandez
Reverend John I. Jenkins
Newton N. Minow
Richard D. Parsons
Olympia Snowe

Executive Director
Janet H. Brown

Chief of Staff
Robin Goldman

* Deceased
The following national sponsors have generously contributed to the 2020 presidential debates:

Anheuser-Busch Companies  
Crowell & Moring LLP  
Judy and Peter Blum Kovler Foundation  
Pentagram  
State and Federal Communications, Inc.  
United Airlines, Inc.

The Commission on Presidential Debates owes special thanks to:

Chris Wallace  
Anchor, Fox News Sunday  

Dr. Frank Newport  
Senior Scientist, Gallup  

National Press Club  

United States Secret Service  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Department of Homeland Security  
The Clemson University Media Forensics Hub
Cleveland Clinic was founded in 1921 by four prominent physicians with a vision to create a hospital based on the teamwork three of them had experienced in World War I military hospitals. Together, they established a doctor-led, not-for-profit medical center, a model unique for its time. Nearly 100 years later, the founders’ vision remains Cleveland Clinic’s mission: “Provide better care of the sick, investigation into their problems, and further education of those who serve.”

What began with a staff of six surgeons, one radiologist, four internists and one biophysicist has grown into a worldwide and world-renowned healthcare system. Today, Cleveland Clinic employs more than 67,000 caregivers globally, with more than 4,500 salaried physicians and researchers, and 17,000 registered nurses and advanced practice providers, representing 140 medical specialties and subspecialties.

As a nonprofit multispecialty academic medical center, Cleveland Clinic integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. The 6,026-bed health system includes a 165-acre main campus near downtown Cleveland, 18 hospitals, more than 220 outpatient facilities, and locations in southeast Florida; Las Vegas, Nevada; Toronto, Canada; Abu Dhabi, UAE; and London, England. In 2019, there were 9.8 million total outpatient visits, 309,000 hospital admissions and observations, and 255,000 surgical cases throughout Cleveland Clinic’s health system. Patients came for treatment from every state and 185 countries.

Driven by a philosophy that discovery and innovation can improve patient lives, Cleveland Clinic has been a leading innovator, including pioneering open heart surgery, inventing coronary angiography, performing the first coronary bypass surgery, completing the first nearly full facial transplant, in addition to breakthroughs in cancer, heart disease, Parkinson’s disease and stroke.

U.S. News & World Report consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation’s best hospitals in its annual “America’s Best Hospitals” survey. This year, U.S. News ranked Cleveland Clinic the No. 2 hospital in America and the No. 1 hospital for heart care and heart surgery for the 26th consecutive year.

Case Western Reserve University

One of the nation’s leading research universities, Case Western Reserve enrolls more than 5,100 undergraduate students and nearly 7,000 graduate and professional students representing 94 countries. Our leading-edge offerings include the nation’s 9th-ranked health law and social work programs, 11th-ranked nursing master’s program, 18th-ranked biomedical engineering graduate degree, and 24th-ranked medical school.*

Located minutes from downtown Cleveland in the cultural hub known as University Circle, our park-like, urban campus is just steps away from some of world’s top hospitals, museums and performance spaces—giving students a
chance to engage with academics and extracurricular activities in a diverse and engaging environment.

With expertise in everything from accounting to art history, polymers to political science, and statistics to systems engineering, our 3,500 campus and clinical faculty members are active scholars who bring their enthusiasm for research and innovation to students and colleagues.

Our graduates take what they learn here to make real-world impact. Among our more than 110,000 alumni, we count Paul Buchheit, creator of Gmail, Peter Tippett, developer of the first antivirus software, Fred Gray, legal defender of Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Lewis, among others, Frank Rudy, inventor of the Nike Air Sole, acclaimed film directors and actors, politicians, Nobel laureates, CEOs, authors and change-makers.

Visit case.edu to see how we think beyond the possible.

*U.S. News & World Report, Best Graduate Schools 2021 (released March 2020)

Health Education Campus of Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland Clinic

Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland Clinic launched a new era of health education when they opened the Health Education Campus in 2019.

The Health Education Campus of Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland Clinic features the four-story, 477,000-square-foot Sheila and Eric Samson Pavilion. The campus also includes a three-story, 132,000-square-foot dental clinic and the Newton Avenue Park. Approximately 2,200 students from the university’s schools of dental medicine, nursing and medicine – including those in Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine – learn, study and collaborate together on the 11-acre campus.

Designed by London architects Foster Partners, the Health Education Campus was envisioned as a way to encourage interaction among future health care professionals in and out of the classroom. Its 27,000-square-foot atrium includes dining options, tables and comfortable chairs and couches where students can eat, study, and discuss their latest lessons. The campus features state-of-the-art technology including a virtual-reality anatomy curriculum, medical simulation center, flight nursing simulation program and touch-screen visualization tables for anatomy teaching.

The Health Education Campus of Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland Clinic is a joint project that the university and hospital first began working toward in 2013. In recent years, the two institutions have collaborated to develop shared courses and other experiences in which students from all of the health programs learn the fundamentals of team-based care while also practicing skills together in simulated settings and at actual clinical sites.
Executive Producer
Martin Slutsky

Co-Executive Producer
Tammy Johnston

Producer
Rory Davies

Associate Producer
Moira Kelly

Campaign Liaison & International Projects
Matt Dippell

Special Projects & Debate Hall Logistics
Jean Cantrell, Director
Daniel Felton, Deputy Director
David James, Deputy Director
Elizabeth Loudy, Assistant House Manager

Operations and Logistics
Aya Estrin, Director
Louisa Keil, Production Coordinator
Allison Bishop, Coordinator

Senior Advisor
Peter Eyre

Director of Security
Robert O’Donnell

Chief Information Security Officer
VJ Rao

Technical Services
Shipley Landiss, Senior Technical Manager
Larry Boshers, Technical Manager

Media
Shelby Sundling, Director
Blanca Margarita Sanchez, Deputy Director
Jeff Kent, Still Photographer Liaison
Hope Wigginton, Communications & Research Coordinator
Betsy Arseneau, Manager

CPD Photographer
Mark Abraham
Pool coverage of the September 29, 2020 debate provided by Fox News and CBS News Radio.
Professional Services

Lewis K. Loss, Esq.
Dykema Gossett PLLC

Steven Adair, Sean Koessel
Volexity, LLC

Morgan | Wingate P.C.

Grace Guggenheim
Guggenheim Productions Inc.

Spectrum Printing & Graphics

Wheels Up

Cleveland Clinic

Gramercy Tech
The Commission on Presidential Debates

DebateWatch2020

In 1992, the CPD organized focus groups around the U.S. to watch the debates, turn them off immediately after they ended and discuss what people had learned. The focus group participants unanimously said how valuable it was to talk about the debates in a civil way without being dismissed or criticized by those with different views. Thus was born DebateWatch, a voter education program established in 1996 which we have reinvigorated in 2020. DebateWatch is designed to bring people together to watch a debate, then turn it off at the end — before media commentary — and discuss what they saw and heard. Hosting a DebateWatch provides a communal viewing experience for participants. The goal is not to say who won or lost, it is to share views with those who may agree and those who don’t. It is to listen respectfully to others’ opinions. DebateWatch is a way to incorporate a town meeting into each debate. We have invited civic groups, libraries, and educational institutions, in particular, to join DebateWatch2020. Our 2020 participants represent all 50 states.

Agnes Scott College  Cottey College
Allegany College of Maryland  Dixie State University Institute of Politics and Public Affairs
American Association of State Colleges and Universities American Democracy Project  Duke University Polis: Center for Politics
Arizona Students Association  East Carolina University
Arkansas Tech University  Elon University
Atlantic Council of the United States  Emory University Emory Votes Initiative
Bellevue College  Fairfield University
Borough of Manhattan Community College  Florida Memorial University
Bowdoin College  For the People
Brigham Young University  Fork Union Military Academy
Brown University Taubman Center and Swearer Center  Furman University
California State University East Bay  George Washington University
California State University Northridge  The Graduate School of Political Management
Carter County Drug Prevention  Georgetown Debate
Central Arkansas Library System  Gonzaga University Debate Team
Centre College  Grinnell College Rosenfield Program/PPPE
Chapman University  Heidelberg University
Colby College  Hofstra University
Columbia State Community College  Houston Community College
Comal County Democratic Party  Honors College
Connecticut College Camels Vote  
Consumnes River College
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Howard Payne University</th>
<th>Mississippi Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech and Debate Team</td>
<td>National Press Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Institute of Technology</td>
<td>New Mexico First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois State University</td>
<td>New Mexico Tech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana State University</td>
<td>NewsTalk 107.9 Idaho Falls/Pocatello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University East</td>
<td>North Carolina Wesleyan College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University Kokomo</td>
<td>Northern Illinois University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University North</td>
<td>Oakland University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University South Bend</td>
<td>Ohio Debate Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University Southeast</td>
<td>Ohio University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University Debate Team</td>
<td>Oklahoma City University Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University Purdue</td>
<td>Civic Engagement Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Indianapolis</td>
<td>Our Lady of the Lake University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville State University</td>
<td>Oxford to the Ballot Box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Madison</td>
<td>Yoknapatawpha Arts Council Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Civic Engagement</td>
<td>Penn State University Brandywine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carroll University</td>
<td>Rosemont College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrupe Scholars</td>
<td>Rutgers University Center for Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson County Community College</td>
<td>Political Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keene State College</td>
<td>Rutgers University Newark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knox College Department of Political Science and International Relations</td>
<td>Sacred Heart University Pioneer Vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis &amp; Clark College</td>
<td>Salem State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln University</td>
<td>Salisbury University Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lipscomb University</td>
<td>Sam Houston State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Star College Montgomery Center for Civic Engagement</td>
<td>Singapore US Embassy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Star College North Harris</td>
<td>South Dakota State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Star College Tomball</td>
<td>Southern Methodist University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Star College University Park Center for Civic Engagement</td>
<td>Speech and Debate Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Metropolitan Debate League</td>
<td>Southern Oregon University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola Marymount University</td>
<td>Southern University Law Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marietta College</td>
<td>Southern Utah University Leavitt Center for Politics and Public Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menlo College</td>
<td>Spectra at Jungle Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercer University Center for Community Engagement</td>
<td>Stony Brook University Center for Civic Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan State University of Denver</td>
<td>Telemundo News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
<td>The Power Coalition for Equity and Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Georgia State University</td>
<td>The State University of New York Brockport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Tennessee State University</td>
<td>The State University of New York Cortland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mills College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Commission on Presidential Debates

The University of Mississippi
The University of Texas
The LBJ School
The Weekly Spar
Tougaloo College
Towson University
Trinity University
Tulsa Debate League
Tunisia The Munathara Initiative
University of Alabama at Anchorage
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
University of California Los Angeles
University of California San Diego
University of Central Arkansas
University of Central Florida
Volunteer UCF
University of Central Missouri
University of Central Oklahoma
Speech and Debate Team
University of Cumberlands
Debate Team
University of Georgia Georgia
Debate Union
University of Illinois Chicago
University of Iowa HawkVote
University of Mary Washington
Debate Team
University of Maryland
Baltimore County
University of Miami
University of Minnesota
University of Montana Max S. Baucus
Institute Department of Public Administration & Policy and Alexander Blewet III School of Law
University of Nebraska at Omaha
University of Nevada Las Vegas
Debate Team
University of New Hampshire Carsey School of Public Policy
University of North Carolina Greensboro
University of North Carolina Pembroke
University of North Texas
Debate Team
University of Richmond
University of South Carolina Beaufort
Communication Studies Program
University of South Florida
Sarasota-Manatee Campus
University of South Florida St. Petersburg
University of Utah
University of West Georgia
University of Wisconsin Parkside
University of Wisconsin Superior
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership & Elections Research Center
US Constitution Party of Virginia
Utah State University
Utah Valley University
Vanderbilt University
Vanderbilt University Debate Team
Virginia Wesleyan University
Wabash College
Washington State Debate Coalition
Washington University in St. Louis
Washington Urban Debate League
Waverly High School
Wayne State Forensic Union
Weber State University
Wesley College
Wesleyan University
Western Carolina University
Western Kentucky University
Western Michigan University WeVote
Wheaton College
Winona State University
Worcester State University
Wright College
Yavapai College

For the current list of participants and to join, please visit www.debates.org/debatewatch
Given their central role in the elections, presidential debates in the United States are watched by audiences worldwide. Increasingly, other countries – particularly emerging democracies – believe that starting their own debate traditions will strengthen their elections and democracies. Often, they seek help in initiating debates. For more than 30 years, the CPD has responded to requests for assistance in a growing number of countries as they try to identify unbiased debate sponsors, choose substantive formats and impartial moderators, ensure fair and sound TV, radio and internet broadcasts, negotiate with candidates and the media, and engage citizens in the political life through debates.

The benefits of debates are many. To cite only two examples: Debates can also help voters make more informed choices at the ballot box. After the first ever 2014 presidential debates in Malawi, citizens reported that elections that year were more substantive and focused on issues that mattered to them personally. Debates also provided a useful side-by-side comparison of candidates and motivated them to vote. Similarly, in El Salvador, a media analyst noted in 2019 that one of the nation’s first presidential debates “…marked a milestone in [the country’s] nascent democracy…due to the clash of ideas and the presentation of the candidates to millions of compatriots in and outside of the country.”

Debates help promote peace and reconciliation in tense election environments. As an African debate participant stated, “The greatest thing about this debate is to see Liberian presidential candidates sitting here and talking to each other and trying to convince voters rather than being in the bush and shooting at each other.” Debates can provide an opportunity for candidates to publicly commit to peaceful elections. This includes agreeing to accept election results or using legal channels to resolve election disputes -- as occurred in Ghana, Kenya and other nations -- rather than calling supporters to the streets.

The CPD, in partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI), helps debate sponsors around the world share their expertise and assist each other, both in organizing debates for the first time and improving on past debates. The support draws on CPD and NDI collective experience with more than 425 debates in 45 countries at all levels of elected office. The underlying conviction is that there is no single best way to organize candidate debates and that countries should choose approaches that best fit with their culture and politics. CPD-NDI initiatives have included long-distance and in-country consultations with debate groups as well as multiple international symposiums in Washington,
The Commission on Presidential Debates

D.C., Mexico City, Mexico and Skopje, North Macedonia that brought together debate groups from around the world for the first time. Symposium participants have discussed practical issues such as establishing public criteria to determine which of dozens of candidates should be invited to debate; creating informative debate formats; producing debates; and working with the media to generate public support to encourage candidates to debate. The symposiums resulted in the creation of the 38-nation Debates International network and regional debate networks that foster ongoing conversation and consultation among members to tackle common challenges. Network resources include the Debates International on-line information center (www.debatesinternational.org) and Organizing and Producing Candidate Debates: An International Guide posted at the site.

To foster these international exchanges, the CPD and NDI have also hosted Debates International network members at U.S. presidential debates at Hofstra University (2012) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (2016). The visits provided a first-hand look at the debate hall’s production elements, media filing center, and wide-ranging educational programs at the universities to engage students and the community in debates. The international visitors shared their own recent debate experiences with each other; in addition, they met with students, faculty and the media. The impact of Covid-19 on global travel will prohibit holding the international visit in 2020. A gathering in Washington, D.C. is planned for 2021. The CPD expresses its deep appreciation to the Howard G. Buffett Foundation for making the international debate exchanges and programming possible.

Debates International Network: Participating Countries

Argentina
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Curacao
Democratic Republic of Congo
Dominican Republic
El Salvador
Ecuador
Ghana
Guatemala
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
Jamaica
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Malawi
Mexico
Nepal
Niger
Nigeria
North Macedonia
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Serbia
Sierra Leone
South Korea
Timor Leste
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Uganda
United States
“Onward!”
Jim Lehrer, 1934-2020