

October 5, 2020

Dear Members of the Commission on Presidential Debates,

We write to you as concerned women voters ahead of the vice-presidential debate scheduled for Wednesday evening. In light of the recent news about the positive COVID diagnosis of President Trump, several members of his staff, and members of Congress, we urge the commission to seriously enhance protections for Vice President Pence and Senator Harris during the debate.

We applaud the Debate commission's decision to use plexiglass as a barrier between both candidates and support the health protocols put in place to keep the candidates safe. In addition to requiring plexiglass between candidates and the moderator, we respectfully request the commission take the following specific steps:

1. Require the Vice President submit contact tracing ahead of the debate to ensure complete transparency about the risk.
2. Since Pence has been exposed to the virus, we request the Vice President take daily and have three consecutive negative PCR COVID tests before the debate.
3. Enforce CDC guidelines and requirements.

We trust that the Commission has the best of intentions as it pertains to the health and well-being of candidates. But given the potential exposure Vice President Pence has evidenced by his schedule over the past week, as well as the White House's lack of transparency about the situation surrounding the president's health, these steps must be taken to protect the candidates, moderator Susan Page, the men and women working these events, and guests around the debate hall.

We have seen time and time again from the Trump administration a level of dishonesty about the President's condition. This administration refuses to take responsibility or follow their own CDC guidelines. The vice president has been exposed to COVID-19 through his contact with the president, members of the president's inner circle and seated near others infected during the White House Rose Garden event. We also know that Vice President Pence was in close contact with Pastor Greg Laurie of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California who has also tested POSITIVE for COVID-19. Pastor Laurie was at the Prayer March on the Mall with Mike Pence and Franklin Graham and Rose Garden event for Judge Amy Coney Barrett later that day.

During the presidential debate, there was a serious lack of enforcement of the policies put in place to stop the spread of the virus. President Trump was not forced to take a COVID-19 test and the First Family and campaign staff did not wear masks. They had complete disregard for the health and safety of others in the debate hall.

The president has failed to lead our country through this pandemic. Time and time again, the president and Mike Pence have referred to this virus as a hoax and have not encouraged wearing masks or social distancing. On the other hand, Vice President Biden and Senator Harris have been models of behavior on public health guidelines. They have followed CDC guidelines and taken the necessary precaution to avoid contracting the virus.

It's important that the American people hear from the candidates about the future of our nation. But the lack of responsibility on behalf of the White House demands that the commission do more to protect everyone going forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donna Brazile  
Roslyn Brock  
Clayola Brown  
Glynda Carr  
Bishop Leah Daughtry  
Jotaka Eaddy  
Karen Finney  
Holli Holiday  
Valerie Jarrett  
Star Jones  
Cecile Richards  
Hilary Rosen