



Debate Watching Guide

Provided By



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**LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®**



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The Idaho Debates Overview

Idaho Public Television presents *The Idaho Debates* in cooperation with the League of Women Voters of Idaho and the Idaho Press Club. Funding for *The Idaho Debates* is provided by Boise State University College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, Friends of Idaho Public Television and the Idaho Public Television Endowment.

Ways to Watch/Listen

- **In Person** – Join the live audience at the Idaho State Capitol in Boise. Click on the links below to reserve tickets.
- **Television** – Watch the debates live on Idaho Public Television.
- **Online** – Streaming video at <http://www.idahoptv.org/elections/2010>.
- **Radio** – Listen on [KBSX](#) 91.5 in Boise (*check your local listings for broadcast times*)

Debate Schedule

Debate	Date/Time	Audience Ticket Link
Superintendent of Public Instruction	Tuesday, Oct. 5 @ 8pm MST / 7pm PST	Click Here
Lt. Governor & Secretary of State	Thursday, Oct. 7 @ 8pm MST / 7pm PST	Click Here
U.S. Senate	Tuesday, Oct. 12 @ 8pm MST / 7pm PST	Click Here
U.S. Representative, 1st District	Thursday, Oct. 14 @ 8pm MST / 7pm PST	Click Here
Governor	Thursday, Oct. 28 @ 8pm MST / 7pm PST	Click Here

Post-Debate Discussion

- **Host a debate watching and analysis party** - read the following sections (provided by the League of Women Voters) for details about hosting a debate discussion party - *Tips for Debating Watching Party Hosts*, *Guiding a Discussion about the Debate* and *Debate Watching 101*
- **Watch “The Takeaway: Post-Debate Analysis with Dr. Jim Weatherby, Dr. Steve Shaw and Special Guests.”** - This live discussion begins immediately after each debate in the Auditorium. The pundits will share their take on how the candidates performed, offer context and arm viewers with the knowledge they need to understand the good, the bad and the ugly side of political debates. Audience participation is strongly encouraged. The video will stream live at www.IdahoPTV.org and will be available online for viewing afterward.
- **Discuss on Facebook** – Online post-debate discussions will be held on Idaho Reports’ Facebook page - <http://www.facebook.com/IDReports>

Useful Documents *(click on link to open)*

- The Idaho Debates 2010 Flyer *(coming soon)*
- [How to Judge a Candidate](#)
- [Candidate Report Card](#)
- [Sign-In Sheet](#)



Idaho Election Basics

Who is running?

[Secretary of State's Candidate List](#)

Election Day

Tuesday, November 2, 2010, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

At the Clerk's option, polling places may be opened at 7:00 a.m.

Who can vote?

Effective July 1, 2010, personal identification is required to vote in Idaho. [More information](#)

You are eligible to vote if you:

- will be at least 18 years old on election day;
- are a citizen of the United States, and;
- have resided in Idaho and in the county where you live for at least 30 days.

You are not eligible to vote if you:

- have been convicted of a felony and have not had your civil rights restored, or;
- are confined in prison on conviction of a criminal offense.

More info: [Voter registration FAQ](#)

Where do I register?

Any eligible person who wishes to vote in Idaho and who has never voted here or who has changed name or address since last registering needs to register. You can find voter registration information [here](#).

Where do I vote?

You can call your county clerk to find out the address of the polling place for your precinct. Find names, addresses, and phone numbers of county clerks from around Idaho [here](#).

Links to Voter Information

- [Idaho Votes](#): the state portal for voter information
- [Idaho Voter Guide](#): voter guide by the Idaho Secretary of State
- [Idaho Statesman Voter Guide](#)
- [Project Vote Smart](#): search for voter info by your local zip code
- [Vote411.org](#): election information by the League of Women Voters

Tips for Debate Watching Party Hosts

The following section is provided by the League of Women Voters. The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) retains copyright for these sections, and any use of these sections, except for "fair use" excerpts, by a third party requires written permission from the LWVUS/EF.

Planning Tips

- Consider hosting a debate watching party at your home or a public location such as a local university, high school, library, student union, community center, restaurant, bar or club.
- Invite your guests to come at least a half-hour before the start of the debate so that you can get acquainted. Provide name tags and/or a time for everyone to introduce themselves.
- Consider using Evite.com, Facebook or another online invitation program to keep things simple, creative, and inexpensive. Have a specific RSVP date and time to gauge how many guests will attend, and provide guests directions to the party location.
- Promote your debate watching party through a variety of means, including Facebook, Twitter, emails, newsletters, websites, local media, flyers, student activities board and area businesses.
- Think about integrating your debate watching party with other group activities you participate in, such as book clubs or volunteer activities.
- Encourage your guests to bring beverages and snacks or meet at a restaurant.
- Setup the room so all of your guest can see and hear the television. If you have a large group, consider breaking the discussions into smaller groups to make it easier to manage.
- Use [this sign-in sheet](#) to keep track of who attended your party and sign them up for the [League of Women Voters' e-newsletter](#). Urge your guests to get involved in the League of Women Voters by [contacting their local League](#) or visiting www.lwv.org.
- After the debate, complete this [online feedback form](#) and send thank you notes or emails to guests.

During the Debate

To add some spirit to your debate watching party, invite your guests to arrive early so that you can offer some viewing tips to keep things lively. The key is to find ways to make the 'watching' part of the party a more active experience.

- Assign guests roles to follow – moderator, candidates, questioner, etc – and after the debate talk about how that perspective affects your view of the debate and the candidates. See the next section for tips on how to analyze each portion of the debate.
- Make predictions about the topics that will be covered in the debate and which candidates might 'win.' After the debate, you can compare your expectations with the outcome.
- Make a game of it – award points or prizes to the guest who can best argue for and/or against statements made by the candidates during their debate.

Guiding a Discussion about the Debate

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Before the Debate Begins

Familiarizing yourself with the candidates and issues before a debate helps you get the most out of it. The preparation will help you focus on what to look for in the debate so that you will get the information you need before deciding how you will vote. It will help if you take some time before the debate to:

- Learn about the candidates and their backgrounds;
- Find out what the important campaign issues are;
- Decide what issues are most important to you;
- Think about the questions you may have and the information you want to get from the debate;
- Open your mind to new opinions/impressions of the candidate regardless of party affiliation.

Starting the Discussion

It will be up to you as the host to get a discussion going after the debate. Use this discussion guide provided by the LWV as a tool, but let your discussion be open. You may also refer to the next section, *Debate Watching 101*, for additional questions.

- Are you familiar with the responsibilities the candidates would hold in the elected position for which they are running? Did this debate help you to see how they would carry out their work?
- Were you already familiar with the candidates? Were all the candidates for office included in the debate? How might the discussion have changed if more or fewer candidates were invited to participate?
- Was there a dominant theme to the debate? If yes, what was it? Was it a theme you feel is relevant to the current political climate in your community?
- How did the candidates respond to the questions that were posed? Were they straightforward, evasive or somewhere in between? Did this impact your opinion of the candidates?
- Did the candidates put forward specific remedies or speak more thematically?
- Did the candidates touch upon issues that are important to you? How did their responses compare with what you would like to hear from politicians?
- Were there any questions that you felt were especially useful? Were important issues left out of the debate?
- Did you strongly agree or disagree with any candidate responses? Was there anything missing from the responses that you would like to have heard?
- How would you answer the questions posed tonight?



Questions for Subsequent Debates in a Series

In an election where candidates face off against one another over a period of several weeks or months, there is an opportunity for viewers to compare and contrast the content and performances of the participants throughout the series. Here are some discussion questions to help direct a conversation about a second, third or subsequent debate.

- How did this debate differ from earlier debates this season?
- Were the same candidates invited?
- Was the format the same or different? Did this affect the quality of the debate?
- How did the candidates perform in comparison with their previous debates?
- Have your opinions on the candidates or the issues changed in the time since the last debate was aired? What brought about these changes?



Debate Watching 101

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Introduction

Candidate debates have a long history in American politics. At every level of government—from city council to state legislature, from Congress to President of the United States—candidates participate in debates to help voters understand who and what they stand for.

Watching debates is an important way for voters to learn more about the candidates and the issues before the election, so that they can cast an informed vote. At the same time, voters need to view debates with a careful eye to get the most information. Candidates rehearse thoroughly for debates, making it hard to get candid, spontaneous answers. Debates can emphasize form over substance, such as the candidates' appearance instead of their stands on the issues. You may watch a debate and still not get answers to the questions you have about the candidates and issues.

You can get the most out of a debate by thinking about the issues and candidates in advance, by viewing the debate with care, and by continuing to research the issues and the candidates after the debate. Debate Watching 101 provides background information and tips to help you get the most out of watching a candidate debate.

What Is a Debate?

A debate is an event at which candidates who are running for an elected office meet face-to-face to answer questions that are asked of them. This gives the candidates a chance to state their views and to respond to their opponents' statements. It gives viewers a chance to directly compare the candidates and their positions.

Debates usually take place in front of a live audience and may also be televised or broadcast on the radio or the Internet. A televised or broadcast debate allows many more people to watch and learn about the candidates and issues.

Debates can follow different formats, or a combination of formats. The most common formats are:

- **Single moderator:** one moderator asks the questions;
- **Panel:** a panel of journalists or experts questions the candidates;
- **Town hall:** questions are submitted by members of the audience or randomly selected voters, in person or by phone or email. The Town Hall format allows for questions to be submitted in advance or during the debate.



The debate usually begins with an introduction of the candidates, who may also be given time to make opening statements. The heart of the debate takes place when the candidates are asked questions and they respond. There usually is a time limit for responses. The questioner may ask follow-up questions to get the candidates to explain or clarify their responses. Some debates give candidates an opportunity to “cross-examine” or ask questions directly of each other. At the end of the debate, the candidates are usually given time to make closing statements.

Before the Debate

Thinking about and preparing for the debate before it takes place will enable you to get the most from watching it. It will familiarize you with the candidates and issues. The preparation will help you focus on what to look for in the debate so that you will get the information you need in deciding who to vote for. It will help if you take some time before the debate to:

- Follow the campaign to learn about the candidates and their backgrounds;
- Find out what the important campaign issues are;
- Decide what issues are most important to you;
- Think about the questions you may have and the information you want to get from the debate to help you in your decision making;
- Open your mind to new opinions/impressions of the candidate regardless of party affiliation.

You may want to make plans to get together with friends or family to watch the debate. Watching the debate in a group and discussing it afterwards helps to clarify your thoughts about what was said in the debate and how the candidates performed.

A debate might not include all of the candidates for the office. Before the debate, note which candidates are included and which are not. If all candidates are not participating, try to find out why. Some debates include only candidates who have significant support, on the theory that the voters should be able to compare the candidates with a realistic chance of winning. Others invite all candidates who have qualified for the ballot. Sometimes candidates who are invited choose not to participate. Candidates with a strong lead might refuse to participate because they think there is no advantage to be gained by debating a lesser known opponent.



During the Debate

When watching the debate, ask yourself questions like these to help you judge the fairness of the debate and the performance of the candidates.

The debate format and questions:

- Does the format give each candidate an equal opportunity to speak and respond to questions?
- Are the questions clear, fair and equally tough on all candidates?
- Do the questions cover the issues that are important to you?
- Is the moderator in control of the debate? Does the moderator need to say less and let the candidates say more?

The candidates:

- Do they answer questions directly, or do they evade them or fail to answer the specific question?
- Do they give specifics about their stands on the issues, or do they speak in generalities? Do they support their positions and arguments with facts and figures?
- Do they talk about their own policies and positions, or do they mostly attack their opponents?
- Are their proposals realistic? Can they actually carry out the promises they are making?
- Do they appear sincere, confident and relaxed?
- Do they show how their backgrounds and experience qualify them to hold the office?
- Are their answers consistent with their previous positions, and if not, do they explain why?
- What image are they trying to create?
- Do their responses appear overly rehearsed or “canned”?

Media coverage:

- If you are watching the debate on television, are reaction shots or other techniques used to create a sense of drama or conflict?
- Are you being influenced by comments made by reporters and commentators immediately before and after the debate?



After the Debate

It will help clarify your thoughts about the candidates and the issues if you take some time after the debate to reflect on what you have just seen and heard. You can do this by:

- Comparing your impressions with others who watched the debate;
- Asking yourself, based on the information you got from watching the debate, which candidate appears most qualified for the office;
- Identifying the issues on which you agree with a candidate and those on which you disagree, and deciding whether that makes you more or less likely to vote for a particular candidate;
- Asking yourself if you learned something new about the issues or the candidate;
- Thinking about whether you have more questions about the issues or the candidates that you want to follow up;
- Getting more information about the candidates' positions from news reports, candidate Web sites and nonpartisan voter information Web sites such as VOTE411.org.
- Watch later debates for more information or to confirm your current impressions of the candidates

Conclusion

Candidate debates give voters a chance to hear the candidates speak and respond to their opponents. They give candidates a chance to present their message directly to a wide audience. As a voter, asking yourself the right questions before, during and after the debate can help you make the most of this opportunity to learn about the candidates and the issues.