

## Read the new debate demands Ben Ginsberg has compiled from Republican campaigns

By **David Weigel** and **Robert Costa** November 2

Ben Ginsberg, the Republican attorney who's become the pro bono debate negotiator for frustrated GOP candidates, has amended his initial letter of questions to TV networks. When Sunday night's meeting of Ginsberg and 13 campaigns concluded, Ginsberg said that he would incorporate their suggestions into a second draft. That draft is below, though a source cautions that no campaign has signed off on it so far.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This letter is on behalf of the 15 Republican Presidential campaigns. We are aware that you are sponsoring a debate on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. Below and attached are questions about your debate to which the campaigns would appreciate answers at your earliest convenience, and in any event no later than a month from today.

The answers you provide to these questions are part of a process that each campaign will use to determine whether its candidate will participate in your debate. All the candidates recognize that robust debates are an important part of the primary elections. It is also important that all debates be appropriate platforms for discussing substantive issues and the candidates' visions for the future.

To achieve this going forward, the campaigns ask that you:

- Answer the questions below within 30 days of receipt by communicating directly with the campaigns. We'll provide an email list for that distribution.
- No later than a month before your debate (earlier if possible), schedule a conference with all the campaigns participating jointly so that the campaigns may ask questions about the format for your debate, the moderators and your answers to the questions below. The campaigns may request an additional call(s) to discuss specific issues.
- The campaigns' will use the manner in which your debate(s) are run (and changes you say you will make from your past debates), the quality and fairness of your moderators' questions, their

enforcement of the rules and their ability to achieve parity in distribution and quality of questions and time among the candidates to evaluate whether the candidates wish to participate in your future debates.

- In addition, based on their evaluation of previous debates, the campaigns wish to have in all future debates a minimum 30-second opening statement and a minimum 30-second closing statement for each participant; candidate pre-approval of any graphics and bios you plan to include in your broadcast about each candidate, and that there be no “lightning rounds” because of their frivolousness or “gotcha” nature, or in some cases both.

The campaigns appreciate your participation to achieve what they feel is a great need for more accountability and transparency in their primary debate process. In addition to addressing the above points, please answer the following:

Where and when will the debate be held?

What are criteria for inclusion? If you choose to base this on polls, please detail which polls and why each poll’s methodology and sample size is acceptable to you.

Who is the moderator? Will there be any additional questioners? Are they seated?

What is the estimated audience for the debate? Will it be disseminated on-line? By radio? Will it be disseminated by other means and do you have any additional partners?

What format do you envision – podiums, table, other?

Will there be questions from the audience or social media? How many? How will they be presented to the candidates? Will you acknowledge that you, as the sponsor, take responsibility for all questions asked, even if not asked by your personnel?

What is your proposed length of the debate?

Will there be opening and closing statements. How long will they be?

Will you commit to provide equal time/an equal number of questions of equal quality (substance as opposed to “gotcha” or frivolous) to each candidate?

How long are the answers and rebuttals? If a candidate is mentioned, will he/she automatically

be called on so they can rebut?

Will there be a gong/buzzer/bell when time is up? How will the moderator enforce the time limits?

Will you commit that you will not:

o Ask the candidates to raise their hands to answer a question

o Ask yes/no questions without time to provide a substantive answer

o Have a “lightning round”

o Allow candidate-to-candidate questioning

o Allow props or pledges by the candidates

o Have reaction shots of members of the audience or moderators during debates

o Show an empty podium after a break (describe how far away the bathrooms are)

o Use behind shots of the candidates showing their notes

o Leave microphones on during breaks

o Allow members of the audience to wear political messages (shirts, buttons, signs, etc.). Who enforces?

What is the size of the audience? Who is receiving tickets in addition to the candidates? Who’s in charge of distributing those tickets and filling the seats?

What instructions will you provide to the audience about cheering during the debate?

What are the plans for the lead-in to the debate (Pre-shot video? Announcer to moderator? Director to Moderator?) and how long is it?

Are you running promo ads before the debate about your moderator(s)?

What type of microphones (lavs or podium)?

Can you pledge that the temperature in the hall be kept below 67 degrees?

If there is any additional information you would like to provide the candidates and the campaigns, please do so. Thank you for your cooperation. Should you have any questions, the campaigns will be pleased to answer them.

Sincerely,

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