



August 6, 2020

The Commission on Presidential Debates
Attn: Co-Chairs Frank Fahrenkopf, Jr., Dorothy S. Ridings, Kenneth Wollack;
Executive Director Janet H. Brown
P.O. Box 58247
Washington, D.C. 20037

Rudolph W. Giuliani
Former Mayor, New York
Donald J. Trump for President, Inc.
1300 N. 17th St.
14th Floor
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Members of the Commission:

Thank you for your swift reply to our letter of August 5, 2020.

We are disappointed in your response, but appreciate your openness to a fourth, or earlier, debate “[i]f the candidates were to agree that they wished to add to that schedule[.]” Your reply makes it clear that the idea of an earlier debate is, in effect, locked away in the basement, alone and diminished. We continue to believe that the American people deserve to see their candidates for president compare their records and visions for the United States before actual voting begins.

We strongly disagree with your assessment of early voting in the upcoming election. In 2016, 41 percent of all votes were cast before Election Day and that figure is certain to rise in 2020. Countless hours of television news coverage and miles of newspaper columns have been devoted to the effect of the coronavirus on voting, with the news media openly advocating for universal mail-in balloting prior to Election Day. Our concerns remain the same: Americans will have already started voting in 16 states well in advance of the first scheduled debate on September 29.

The Commission’s current debate schedule remains outdated and fails to adapt to the election calendar of today. In 1980, only 5 percent of voters cast their ballots before Election Day, with that figure certain to be over 50 percent in 2020. But even in 1980, the debate schedule began earlier, with the first debate held on September 21, as compared to this year’s first event on

September 29. The old, tired answer of “we’ve always done it this way,” simply will not suffice in this extraordinary year.

It also seems to us that adding a debate or moving one to an earlier time should not present any logistical challenges you have not already encountered. Indeed, the University of Notre Dame withdrew as the host of a 2020 debate and was promptly replaced by Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Clinic. Finding an additional host and location was evidently possible once and should be again.

We are likewise not persuaded by your assurance that the Commission is “ready for any contingency that is necessary as a result of the pandemic.” Since your current refusal to consider an additional debate or an earlier date is based on Mr. Biden’s unwillingness to agree, it would be logical to assume that any further changes to debate arrangements would hinge on his opinion. We must insist on a commitment that the two candidates will **definitely** appear on stage, in person – whether in a television studio without an audience or elsewhere – and not through separate, online transmissions where Mr. Biden could rely on notes, teleprompter, or handlers.

While we do understand that Mr. Biden has been sequestered in his basement in Wilmington, Delaware for some time, President Trump still believes that the American people deserve to see the candidates for president side by side at some point. The President has committed to and will participate in the three debates already on the schedule and we hold out hope that Mr. Biden will eventually realize that it is a disservice to the American people to try to hide for as long as possible. We aim to continue to put public pressure on Mr. Biden to agree that Americans must see an in-person comparison of the records, visions, and vitality of the two candidates for president before voting begins.

Sincerely,



Rudolph W. Giuliani
Former Mayor, New York

CC: Fmr. Vice President Joe Biden
Basement
Wilmington, DE