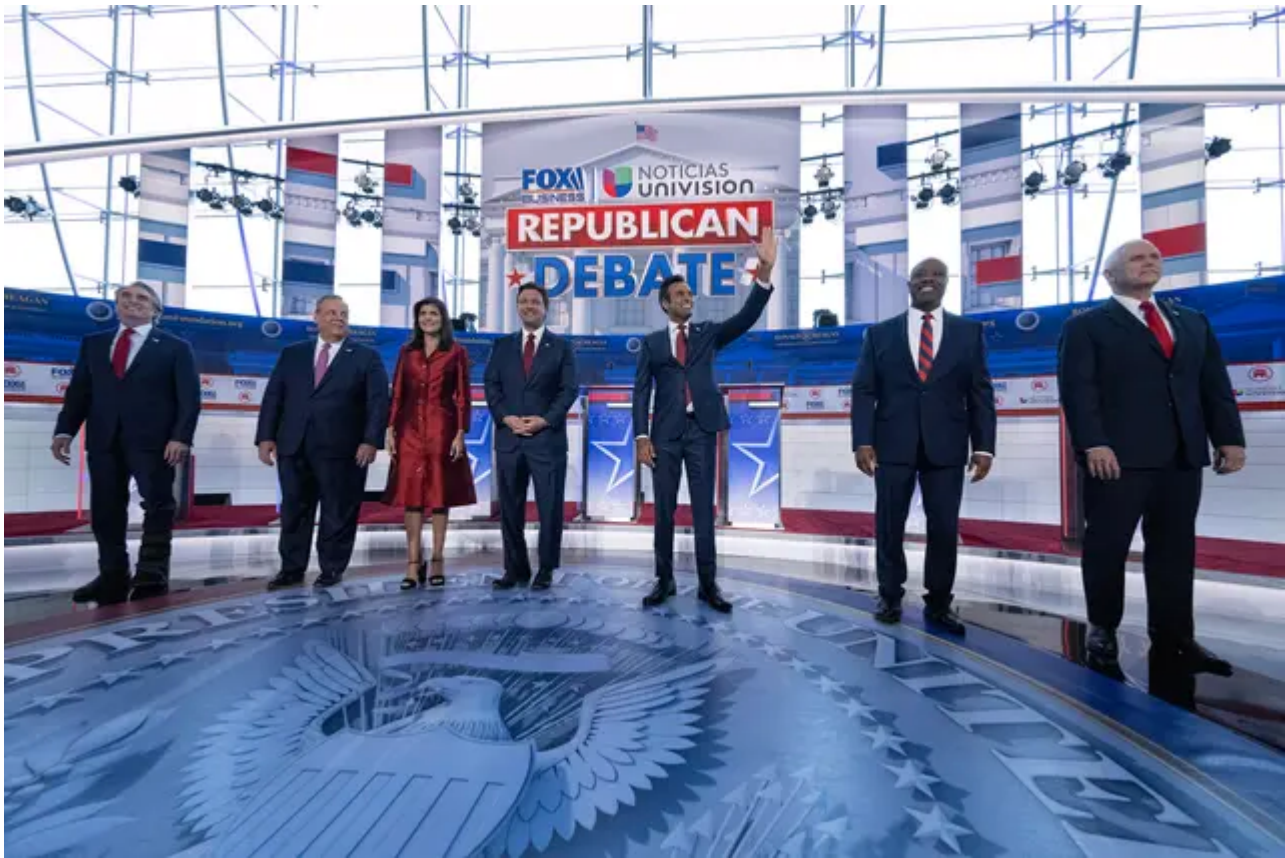


# Are the GOP Primary Debates Worth It?



by Roger L. Simon

With the absent former President Donald Trump lapping the field in a manner that can safely be called unprecedented (approaching 60 percent among nine active candidates), one must ask, do the Republican National Committee (RNC) debates have any purpose?

The audience doesn't seem terribly interested, if we can believe [NBC News](#):

“With the former president again skipping the debate, how much interest would there be in hearing out a collection of non-Trump candidates?”

“The answer, per the Nielsen ratings service: about 9.3 million people. That's a steep drop from the first debate,

which was also held without Trump and attracted about 12.8 million viewers. It also represents – by a significant margin – the lowest TV audience for any Republican presidential debate since the start of the 2016 cycle, when Trump first became a candidate.”

The lowest since President Trump first became a candidate? Not very inspiring, is it?

In a press release dated Oct. 3, candidate Vivek Ramaswamy—who was scheduled to go mano-a-mano with Chris Christie and is generally thought to have fared better than most in the debates—was, to the say the least, yet more skeptical.

“Last week’s RNC debate was a disgrace, and I’m starting to believe that was by design. This is what a brokered and rigged nomination process looks like. I disagree like hell with Chris Christie, but when they asked me to face off with him, I said I’d be a man and do it—before the RNC intervened to cut it off.”

Well, they have.

From [Politico](#): “The Republican National Committee told former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy Monday night that if they went through with a separate joint appearance on Fox News they would be forbidden from participating in subsequent committee-sanctioned debates.”

No doubt the RNC was upset by Mr. Ramaswamy’s calling the debates a “disgrace,” although that characterization of the cacophonous event is shared by many.

Nevertheless, the two candidates acquiesced to the committee’s warning and the arguably more interesting one-on-one will be replaced by back-to-back segments from the two men.

Still, it’s worth noting Mr. Ramaswamy had more unkind things to say about the debates in his press release:

“Instead of allowing open dialogue and the airing of ideas to give primary voters a real choice, the Establishment would rather cut backroom deals and offer up phony debates including candidates with no visible path and questions that no voter would ever ask. The Establishment was hellbent on taking down Trump. Now they’re hellbent on propping up their favored puppets. We won’t let them get away with it.”

Well, it doesn’t look, as of now, like they’ve done a very good job of taking down President Trump and Mr. Ramaswamy doesn’t specify who the “favored puppets” are, but whoever they are, they haven’t made much of an impact either.

It is clear, however, that the RNC has taken a traditional establishment route in conceiving these debates.

The choice of Fox News as chief moderator for both debates—yes, it was “Fox Business” for the second but that is a distinction with the most minor of differences—sent a firm establishmentarian signal from the outset.

Admittedly, events of this nature are a long time in planning and Fox only somewhat recently greatly tarnished its reputation by firing Tucker Carlson, widely regarded as the most influential of conservative commentators.

But Fox’s conservative/constitutionalist bona fides have been in question for some time, at least from that notorious moment when their then-host Chris Wallace squelched President Trump’s questioning of the Hunter Biden laptop, an extremely biased act of suppression that, in retrospect, may have thrown an election.

Fox seems to have been chosen by the RNC for the debates mainly because it always has been—a default choice that fails to acknowledge, accidentally or deliberately, the massive changes that have occurred and the many new companies that exist on the right with fresh faces and ideas.

What their choice then underscores is the ever-widening gulf between what Mr. Ramaswamy calls the Establishment Republican Party and its voters. This gulf will not easily be healed, even if President Trump succeeds in negotiating the escalating legal shoals with which he is being confronted, not the least of which is a recent [gag order](#).

The Republican primary debates and its participants have taken on the aspect of vultures, flying around waiting for something bad to happen to President Trump.

On top of this, at this writing, the country no longer has a speaker of the House, throwing the Republican Party into a disarray that could easily have been predicted and possibly avoided by making some tough choices.

The question the people at the RNC should be asking themselves now is who they really are and whom they represent.

They have made a few nods to the new reality, like allowing Rumble to broadcast the debates.

For their own relevance, at the very least, it's time to go a lot further.

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