

AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY



ACTIONSM

To: Interested Parties

From: Emily Seidel; Senior Advisor, AFP Action

Re: What we're watching for at tomorrow's debate

Date: August 22, 2023

When we announced our intention to engage earlier and in more races across the country, including the Republican presidential primary, we made clear the reasons why. Washington, D.C. is broken. The toxic nature of our politics is making it impossible to advance good policy. Americans need and deserve better leaders who will chart a more productive path forward. That's why we're working with voters to support candidates who will turn the page on the past.

According to the latest polls, the vast majority of Americans would prefer a candidate other than Joe Biden or Donald Trump. We are working to give Americans a better choice, and ultimately help elect a president in 2025 who can move us past today's political stalemate and represent a new chapter for the country.

To date this year, Americans for Prosperity has engaged with over 2.5 million voters to better understand the issues they care about and what they want to hear from the candidates. AFP Action will acquire this data to bring new voters into the primary process and deploy its grassroots army to elect the best candidates.

Here's what they're telling AFP activists, and what we hope to hear at tonight's debate:

Despite what you see on cable news, the economy and inflation are still the top issue for most voters. Bidenomics has been an unmitigated disaster for our economy, but the Biden administration is going all-in to try to convince people it's working. Republican voters are looking for a candidate who can hold this administration accountable for their failure, call out the crushing blow that inflation is having on families across the country, and provide an alternative vision to change our economic trajectory and reignite the American Dream. Successive administrations – both Republican and Democrat – have also overseen multi-trillion increases to our national debt, and the United States is now on track to add another \$19 trillion to its national debt over the next decade. Voters deserve to hear from each candidate what their specific vision and plan is to secure a stronger economic future for America and its citizens.

Secure the border and fix our immigration system. The crisis at America's southern border is unacceptable. Lives are put at risk every day the Biden administration refuses

to work with Congress to reduce illegal border crossings. But it's not enough to just focus on securing the border – we must also fix the broken system. Good people who want to come to America legally to improve their lives and contribute to our communities can't because our system can't process them. By failing to secure *legal* immigration, we only empower the people exploiting that failure to do us harm. Voters deserve to hear what each candidate's specific plan is to both secure the border and to fix our broken immigration system to solve this systemic, long-term problem. We need more than band-aid solutions and cable TV soundbites.

Parents and students need to be in control of their education. For many families, remote learning during the pandemic exposed a top-down, bureaucratic model that wasn't working for millions of kids. Our children deserve better. We need to stop empowering the bureaucracy and start empowering families. That means more options and more control in the hands of the students and their parents – they should be the primary decision-makers. And the best way to ensure our schools are places of learning, not cultural battlegrounds, is to make sure the money follows the students – not the system. Families should be able to choose the learning environment that is right for their kids and aligns with their values, whatever that environment may be.

Draw sharp contrasts with the Biden administration. From day one, the Biden administration has pursued a top-down, big-government agenda that seeks to manipulate the economy with more spending, more regulations, and more government control. Republican candidates should differentiate themselves from this approach, not pitch their own version of Bidenomics from the right. There's nothing conservative about ignoring America's looming fiscal crisis, increasing government control over private companies, or cracking down on free speech. If Republicans are going to beat Joe Biden, they need to offer a better vision and a real plan.

Those are the issues AFP activists hear most frequently when talking to Republican primary voters at the doors and on the phone. But they also hear something else: **the fear that the nomination of Donald Trump would guarantee a second term of the Biden-Harris administration.** Even Trump's own supporters acknowledge the serious flaws in his candidacy and his inability to attract independent or moderate voters needed to win. And they are open to an alternative candidate. Based on AFP's conversations with voters, two-thirds of Trump's current supporters admit his electability is a problem.

While it's easy for these nights to get boiled down to soundbites; we will be looking for substance and civility. Americans deserve better than the choices they've had in recent elections. This debate is an opportunity for each candidate to show how they intend to break the downward spiral of our politics and get back to advancing good policy that will improve lives. Republican voters are looking to move on from Donald Trump – they just need to see someone with the vision and conviction to move our country forward and win in 2024. That's what we hope to see, too.