

US Senate Debate/Candidate Forum Proposal

Event Description

The Charlotte Observer, The News & Observer of Raleigh and Time Warner Cable News (formally News 14 Carolina) will sponsor a debate/forum with Republican candidates for US Senate. The one-hour event will be held at a venue that is still to be determined in the Charlotte area on Tuesday, April 22 at 7 pm. The venue will accommodate a live audience. Candidates, reporters and moderator will be seated at separate tables arranged in a "reverse V" formation on the venue stage. The moderator will be at a podium positioned at the point of the V. The seating and speaking order will be determined by lot drawn live at 7 pm, Monday, April 21, during the Capital Tonight telecast on Time Warner Cable. Candidates or their representatives may attend the live telecast to witness the live drawing. Tickets to attend the debate will be distributed to good government or public service organizations and offered to the general public through the sponsoring news organizations websites. Audience members may not bring signs into the hall. The audience will be asked to refrain from applause or other disruptive behavior. Audience members who do otherwise will be escorted out of the hall. Each campaign will be allotted a block of tickets. The number of tickets per campaign will be determined based on the size of the venue. Each candidate will be supplied a holding room for use before and after the event. A "spin room" will be established for candidates, or their representatives, to answer news media questions following the event. Notes, props or other "visual aids" will not be permitted on stage. The debate will be telecast live on Time Warner Cable News and on the sponsoring news organizations websites. The event will be made available for later viewing on Local On Demand on Time Warner Cable and archived on the sponsoring news organizations websites. The event will be hosted by Tim Boyum, anchor of "Capital Tonight."

Event Format

The format will be divided between reporter and voter questions. There will be no opening statement. The first half of the event will be questions from representatives of the three sponsoring news organizations. There will be a short break between the two thirty-minute halves of the event for a recorded element to acknowledge venue host. The second half will be questions from voters. Those questions will be solicited via email on the news organizations websites. The email questions will be asked live by the moderator, recorded on video or asked live from the audience. Voters asking questions will be identified by name and city. The sponsoring news organizations will choose the voter questions from those submitted. Approximately two minutes will be reserved before closing statements for a "lightening round" of questions asked by the moderator. Those questions may not necessarily be political in nature. Candidates will be asked for a one-word response. Each candidate will be allotted time for a closing statement.

Candidate Eligibility

Eligibility to participate in the event will be based on the following criteria:

- The candidate must average at least 7 percent voter preference in polling conducted by at least three news organizations or independent research firms chosen by the sponsoring news organizations. We will use the flat poll numbers (no margin of error) when computing the averages.

Timeline for April 22, 2014

- 7:00 pm (Monday, April 21) – Lots drawn to determine seating and speaking order during live telecast of Capital Tonight on Time Warner Cable. Campaign representatives will be allowed in the studio to witness event.
- 2:00 pm – Candidates or their representatives participate in final on-stage walk through.
- 5:30 pm – Venue opens for audience seating.
- 6:00 pm – Candidates arrive and are escorted to separate holding rooms.
- 6:30 pm – Audience members briefed on telecast and any restrictions.
- 6:35 pm – Candidates take the stage.
- 6:40 pm – Outside media allowed access for ten minutes for video and still photography. Multi-box feed available for television stations.
- 6:45 pm - Moderator reviews format and answers last minute questions.
- 6:50 pm – Outside media escorted to reserved seats or “spin room.”
- 7:00 pm – Telecast begins. Moderator introduces panel and candidates and reviews ground rules.
- 7:02 pm – Questioning begins. Representatives from Charlotte Observer, The News & Observer of Raleigh and Time Warner Cable News rotate questioning with each candidate given at least forty-five seconds to answer. Each media representative asks at least two questions.
- 7:30 pm (approx) – Thirty second break for preproduced video on venue host.
- 7:31 pm – Telecast resumes. Candidates answer questions from voters. Questions are prescreened by sponsoring news organizations. They will include pre-recorded questions on video, questions received via email asked live by the moderator and questions asked live audience members. Each candidate has forty-five seconds to answer. Expect time for four voter questions.
- 7:50 pm – Moderator asks “lightning round” questions.
- 7:52 pm – Questioning ends. Candidates make thirty-second closing statements.
- 7:58 pm – Telecast ends. Cool down period begins
- 8:15 pm – “Spin Room” available for candidates, or their representatives, to meet with outside media for post-event interviews.