



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on October 17, 2012

Presidential Debate: Obama More Combative, No Gaffes, No “Winner”

Both Democrat and Republican spin-meisters are claiming victory for their candidate in the October 16 presidential town hall-format debate at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, a contest noted for its lack of gaffes by President Obama and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney.

The candidates argued — and interrupted each other — over disputed factual allegations on the issue of jobs, gasoline prices, Libyan embassy security, and tax policy numbers. “I know what it takes to bring good jobs back,” Romney charged early in the debate, stressing his private sector experience. President Obama countered with the claim that he had set the economy back on course for economic growth. “What I want to do is to build on the five million jobs that we’ve created over the last 30 months in the private sector alone.”



But Obama’s bizarre claim of responsibility for job creation numbers in the rather anemic economic recovery was tame compared with the ridiculous claims made later in the debate by both candidates. Mitt Romney claimed that Obama’s policy on domestic oil drilling was one of the prime causes for soaring oil prices on the global market from \$1.86 per gallon when he took office to nearly \$4 per gallon today. Obama countered with an equally outlandish and unrealistic claim:

Think about what the governor just said. He said that when I took office, the price of gasoline was \$1.86. Why is that? Because the economy was on the verge of collapse. Because we were about to go through the worst recession since the Great Depression, as a consequence of some of the same policies that Governor Romney is now promoting. So, it’s conceivable that Governor Romney could bring down gas prices. Because with his policies we might be back in that same mess.

The irony is that the United States likely does face another economic recession in the next year because of rising national debt and low national savings rates, and neither Obama nor Romney has introduced any policy proposals designed to reverse either metric.

Obama did get in a credible dig at Mitt Romney’s murky tax policy. Romney claims he can cut income tax rates 20 percent across the board without losing any tax revenue by eliminating deductions, but the Republican nominee has declined to publicly specify which deductions he’d eliminate:

Governor Romney was a very successful investor. If somebody came to you, Governor, with a plan that said, “Here, I want to spend seven or eight trillion dollars. And we’re going to pay for it, but we



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can't tell you until maybe after the election how we're going to do it," you wouldn't have taken such a sketchy deal. And neither should you. Because the math doesn't add up.

Even though Romney's tax proposal is basically a detail-free, "trust me" proposal, Obama's numbers were equally "sketchy." The president's number of \$7-8 trillion is a mythological figure, based on extrapolating Romney's tax cut and military spending increases out 10 years, far longer than he'd serve as president if elected next month. Obama's numbers also assume that no deductions or tax loopholes would be eliminated by Romney's proposal. Romney immediately responded with claims that his numbers add up, and that he had signed balanced budgets even as Obama had yet to sign a budget less than a trillion dollars in the red:

Of course they add up. I was someone who ran businesses for 25 years and balanced the budget. I ran the Olympics and balanced the budget. I ran the State of Massachusetts as a governor — to the extent any governor does — and balanced the budget all four years. When we're talking about math that doesn't add up, how about \$4 trillion of deficits over the last four years — \$5 trillion. That's math that does not add up.

The debate concluded with a summation by Obama about the 2008 political promises he kept, including the Iraq War draw-down (which happened later than the 16 months he promised), refocusing the wars against Osama bin Laden, and a few other promises. Romney closed by reminding viewers of the 2008 promises Obama didn't keep: Immigration reform, cutting the deficit in half, and lowering unemployment under six percent.

Media Bias?

The latest debate also confirmed a pattern of letting the Democrat talk longer in debates that have been moderated by establishment media personalities. Obama talked just over three minutes longer than Romney, 44:04 minutes to 40:50, in this second contest. In the vice presidential debate, Democrat Joe Biden [talked](#) 1:20 minutes longer, alongside some 83 interruptions of Paul Ryan, not counting the 31 interruptions by moderator Martha Raddatz. During the [first debate](#), moderated by PBS' Jim Lehrer, Obama spoke two-and-a-half minutes longer than Romney.

Thus, in three debates moderated by establishment media, the Democrat got the most talking time in every debate. This is perhaps not surprising, since the establishment media favors the Democratic Party across the board. Before the most recent debate, the establishment *Washington Post* published a [video](#) interview of three of its reporter/pundits previewing the debate that was little more than a liberal suggestion box for Obama to win the event. Moreover, employees of establishment media outlets — including even the [supposedly Republican-leaning Fox Television network](#) — have heavily favored President Obama with political donations over Romney and Republicans. The moderator of the most recent debate, CNN's Candy Crowley, works for a company ([Time Warner](#)) [whose employees donated money to Obama by a ratio of 18 to one over Romney](#).

Photo: President Barack Obama and Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney participate in the second presidential debate at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., Oct. 16, 2012:

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