



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 27, 2016

Trump Will Skip Next Fox News Debate, Says He Knows “When to Walk Away”

Presidential candidate Donald Trump’s  campaign issued a statement on January 26, notifying the press and public that he will not be participating in the next FOX News debate on January 28. The statement said Trump “will instead host an event in Iowa to raise money for the Veterans and Wounded Warriors.”

The language of the statement was characteristically Trump, suggesting that the candidate may likely have written it himself, instead of delegating it to a member of his campaign staff. A typical “Trumpism” in the statement was:

Unlike the very stupid, highly incompetent people running our country into the ground, Mr. Trump knows when to walk away. Roger Ailes and FOX News think they can toy with him, but Mr. Trump doesn’t play games.

Most political observers connect Trump’s decision to forego the debate to his ongoing complaints about Fox News political commentator Megyn Kelly, who was a moderator for the first Republican Party presidential debate of this election cycle last August in Cleveland. During that debate, Trump clashed with Kelly after she asked him about his track record of calling women “fat pigs, dogs, slobs and disgusting animals.”

Trump quipped in response that he used those terms only in reference to Rosie O’Donnell, after which Kelly charged that his history of making such remarks “was well beyond Rosie O’Donnell.”

Kelly told Trump: “Does that sound to you like the temperament of a man we should elect as president, and how will you answer the charge from Hillary Clinton, who is likely to be the Democratic nominee, that you are part of the war on women?”

Trump’s reply, “I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct,” was rewarded by applause from the audience. He continued:

I’ve been challenged by so many people, and I don’t frankly have time for total political correctness. And to be honest with you, this country doesn’t have time either. This country is in big trouble. We don’t win anymore. We lose to China. We lose to Mexico both in trade and at the border. We lose to everybody.

And frankly, what I say, and oftentimes it’s fun, it’s kidding. We have a good time. What I say is what I say. And honestly Megyn, if you don’t like it, I’m sorry. I’ve been very nice to you, although I could probably maybe not be, based on the way you have treated me. But I wouldn’t do that.

Those comments were met with more applause.

During Fox News Channel’s *Kelly File* on January 26, Kelly responded to Trump’s statement that he would not be showing up at Thursday’s debate — presumably due to his dislike of Kelly as one of the debate moderators.



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Kelly said that Trump has mentioned the exchange between them “as evidence of alleged bias on my part.” She continued, saying she “maintain[s] it was a tough but fair question and we agreed to disagree,” but Trump used part of his weekend to resurrect “his complaints about yours truly arguing that Fox News Chief Roger Ailes should ban me from the debate this Thursday,” even though “Fox News had announced back in August that Bret Baier, Chris Wallace and I would be the moderators of this next debate.”

Kelly remarked to Fox News senior political analyst Brit Hume: “What’s interesting here is Trump is not used to not controlling things as the chief executive of a large organization. But the truth is, he doesn’t get to control the media.”

Trump and Fox News exchanged sometimes strongly worded statements several times after the candidate announced his decision to skip the debate.

Bloomberg reported that a Fox News network statement e-mailed to the media said that “capitulating to politicians’ ultimatums about a debate moderator violates all journalistic standards, as do threats.” Fox News said it had “warned” [Trump’s campaign manager Corey] Lewandowski “not to level any more threats” against Kelly, as when he allegedly told the network that “Megyn had a ‘rough couple of days after that last debate’ and he ‘would hate to have her go through that again.’”

“We can’t give in to terrorizations toward any of our employees,” the network said.

After Trump criticized Kelly for treating him “unfairly” at last August’s debate, Fox News issued the following response: “We learned from a secret back channel that the Ayatollah and Putin both intend to treat Donald Trump unfairly when they meet with him if he becomes president.”

Trump did not appreciate the humor of whoever wrote that statement, and suggested that “it was written by a child.”

In a statement to reporters, Trump said that instead of attending the debate, his campaign will “raise some money for the Wounded Warriors.”

“We’ll raise money for the vets,” he said. “I was all set to do the debate. I came here to do the debate. When they sent out the wise-guy press releases a little while ago, done by some PR person, along with Roger Ailes, I said: ‘Bye, bye.’”

Another Republican presidential candidate, Texas Senator Ted Cruz, while speaking at an evening rally, offered to meet Trump “*mano a mano*” anytime. Cruz charged that Trump was scared of Kelly, and told his gathered supporters that skipping the debate was like refusing a job interview. “If someone did that, didn’t show up at the interview, you know what you’d say? You’re fired,” Cruz said, playing off on Trump’s signature catch phrase from the TV show starring the business magnate: *The Apprentice*.

Another candidate, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie told Kelly on a Fox News program that not having Trump at the debate will “give us more time to talk.” Christie added: “That’s OK with me, but the American people should wonder: If you’re not willing to show up when everything isn’t going your way? That’s not the way your job as governor goes. I’ll be there.”

While the next debate will be missing one participant, another candidate, who was absent during the January 14 debate, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, will be there. Paul, who participated in December’s debate, was excluded from the main debate stage last time around because he failed to rate high enough in the polls used by Fox Business Network to determine who was included. Paul declined to take part in Fox’s earlier “undercard” debate and told CNN’s Wolf Blitzer: “I won’t participate in anything



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that's not first tier because we have a first tier campaign."

However, thanks to registering high enough in Fox's selective polls, Paul will be there Thursday night. "To qualify, a candidate needs to be either among the top six in an average of the five most recent national polls, or among the top five in an average of the five most recent Iowa or New Hampshire polls," Fox said in a statement.

Other candidates joining Paul on the main stage will be Cruz, Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Dr. Ben Carson, Christie, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, and Ohio Governor John Kasich.

If Christie's statement that Trump's absence will give the other candidates "more time to talk" holds true, Paul may benefit the most of all. During last August's debate, Trump spoke longer than any other candidate and more than twice as long as Paul, who received the least amount of time of all the candidates. Trump spoke for 10 minutes, 30 seconds during that debate, compared with only four minutes, 51 seconds for Paul. A *Newsweek* commentator wrote that "Paul and Carson got notably fewer questions from the debate's hosts, a fact Carson joked about to Kelly, saying at one point that he wasn't sure he'd get to speak again."

However, even Carson got to speak longer than Paul, receiving six minutes, 28 seconds of time.

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