

Thoughts on the vice-presidential debate

Posted on October 11, 2012 by [Paul Mirengoff](#)

Joe Biden was always going to be an attack dog tonight. After the presidential debate, the Democrats needed him aggressively to promote their post-debate excuse that Romney is all smoke and mirrors. Moreover, Biden is well suited for the attack dog role.

I didn't expect, however, that Biden's demeanor would be so off-putting. The ridiculous toothy smile didn't come as a shock. But the smirking, mocking, laughter, constant interruptions of Paul Ryan, and cranky interaction with moderator Martha Raddatz, whom he chided at one point for allegedly misstating the facts, did.

My sense is that Biden's demeanor cost him the debate. Substantively, both candidates did pretty well. Ryan got a boost when Raddatz began the debate with a question about Libya. Biden was poised to play offense, but had to play defense on this issue, in the face of a very effective line of attack by Ryan.

Thereafter, Biden was the aggressor. Ryan did reasonably well in countering most of Biden's attacks, and he landed a few good punches of his own. But Biden was the dominant personality.

Normally, a close substantive debate, like a close boxing match, goes to the aggressor. But when the aggressor behaves insufferably, I think it works the other way around.

I watched the debate with my wife, who is neither a Republican nor a Democrat. She was appalled by Biden. A few times, she even told his TV image to shut up and let Ryan speak. I can't ever remember my wife talking to the TV before — that's my role in our house.

It wasn't just Biden's rudeness that my wife found off-putting. As the debate wore on, and Biden's toothy grin was replaced by an ominous scowl, my wife said he was making her feel very nervous. Later, I saw that [Ann Althouse](#) had the same reaction. Biden, she said, "created this disturbing atmosphere of *anxiety*" (the emphasis is Althouse's).

Did other independent voters, especially females, share this reaction? I don't know. But I do know how badly Al Gore's debate demeanor hurt him in 2000. If anything, Biden outdid Gore in the boorish behavior department. I also know that for a lawyer to behave before a jury as Biden conducted himself before a national audience would risk serious damage to his client.

So did Biden do serious damage to his client, President Obama? Probably not. The vice presidential debates rarely count for much. Biden will have boosted the morale of Democrats disappointed by Obama's debate performance. But he won't have impressed independents and undecided females; in fact he will have turned some of them off.

Democrats will hope that voters look beyond Biden's obnoxiousness and find merit in his various attacks on Romney. But Ryan parried most of those attacks were fairly effectively. In any case, the lasting impression of this debate will likely be the Democratic messenger, not the Democratic message.

Finally, a few words about Martha Raddatz, about whose selection as moderator I was critical. On the whole, I was not impressed with her performance. She allowed Biden repeatedly to interrupt Ryan without allowing Ryan to regain the floor. And she herself interrupted Ryan at times just when he was getting to heart of his response.

I don't assume that Raddatz conducted the debate this way out of pro-Obama bias. She may have been as taken aback by Biden's behavior as the rest of us. But given her connection, past and present (through the father of her child who holds high office under Obama), the question of partiality is a legitimate one. That's why moderators shouldn't have such connections.



Paul Mirengoff is a retired attorney in Washington, D.C. He is a 1977 graduate of Dartmouth College and a 1974 graduate of Stanford Law School. He has two daughters and lives with his family in Bethesda, Maryland.

Paul supports Everton FC of the English Premier Soccer League, as well as the Washington Redskins, the Washington Wizards, and the University of Maryland basketball team.

Power Line

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Power Line is an American political publication, providing news and commentary from a conservative point-of-view. It was originally written by three lawyers who attended Dartmouth College together: John H. Hinderaker, Scott W. Johnson, and Paul Mirengoff.

Mirengoff left the blog shortly after writing a January, 2011 post on a Tucson memorial service honoring those who died as the result of shootings at a Gabrielle Giffords rally; in his post he criticized the inclusion of Native American rituals. The post was later removed, but days later Mirengoff left the blog, and in announcing his exit thanked Hinderaker, Johnson, and the readers for the opportunity of participating in the blog.^[1] When Mirengoff left the site, Hinderaker and Johnson recruited Steven Hayward to replace him. On Apr 20, 2012, Mirengoff rejoined the site, saying "My return to blogging coincides with my retirement from the practice of law. With all that extra time on my hands, I hope to be a better, more productive blogger this time around."^[2] The site is published by Publiir, founded by Joe Malchow, another Dartmouth College graduate. The site gained wide recognition for its role in covering the Kilian documents scandal that eventually led to the departure of Dan Rather from the CBS Evening News. The blog was founded in late May 2002. Audience estimates suggest that the column has eight million pageviews per month, making it one of the largest blogs.

In 2004, Power Line was named *Time* magazine's first-ever "Blog of the Year."^[3] When AOL added blogs to their news website in 2007, Power Line was one of the five blogs included.^[4] A 2007 memo from the National Republican Senatorial Committee described Power Line as one of the five best-read national conservative blogs.^[5]

The authors also write for newspapers and magazines, appear on radio and television. Hinderaker and Johnson are fellows of the Claremont Institute.

Taiblog

The Vice Presidential Debate: Joe Biden Was Right to Laugh

by: **Matt Taibbi**

I've never thought much of Joe Biden. But man, did he get it right in last night's debate, and not just because he walloped sniveling little Paul Ryan on the facts. What he got absolutely right, despite what you might read this morning (many outlets are criticizing Biden's dramatic excesses), was his tone. Biden did absolutely roll his eyes, snort, laugh derisively and throw his hands up in the air whenever Ryan trotted out his little beady-eyed BS-isms.

But he *should* have! He was absolutely right to be doing it. We all should be doing it. That includes all of us in the media, and not just paid obnoxious-opinion-merchants like me, but so-called "objective" news reporters as well. We should all be rolling our eyes, and scoffing and saying, "Come back when you're serious."

The load of balls that both Romney and Ryan have been pushing out there for this whole election season is simply not intellectually serious. Most of their platform isn't even a real platform, it's a fourth-rate parlor trick designed to paper over the real agenda — cutting taxes even more for super-rich dickheads like Mitt Romney, and getting everyone else to pay the bill.

The essence of the whole campaign for me was crystalized in the debate exchange over Romney's 20 percent tax-cut plan. ABC's Martha Raddatz turned the questioning to Ryan:

MS. RADDATZ: Well, let's talk about this 20 percent.

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: Well — (chuckles) —

MS. RADDATZ: You have refused yet again to offer specifics on how you pay for that 20 percent across-the-board tax cut. Do you actually have the specifics, or are you still working on it, and that's why you won't tell voters?

Here Ryan is presented with a simple yes-or-no answer. Since he doesn't have the answer, he immediately starts slithering and equivocating:

REP. RYAN: Different than this administration, we actually want to have big bipartisan agreements. You see, I understand the —

"We want to have bipartisan agreements?" This coming from a Republican congressman? These guys would stall a bill to name a post office after Shirley Temple. Biden, absolutely properly, chuckled and said, "That'd be a first for a Republican congress." Then Raddatz did exactly what any self-respecting journalist should do in that situation: she objected to being lied to, and yanked on the leash, forcing Ryan back to the question.

I'm convinced Raddatz wouldn't have pounced on Ryan if he hadn't trotted out this preposterous line about bipartisanship. Where does Ryan think we've all been living, Mars? It's one thing to pull that on some crowd of unsuspecting voters that hasn't followed politics that much and doesn't know the history. But any professional political journalist knows enough to know the abject comedy of that line. Still, Ryan was banking on the moderator not getting in the way and just letting him dump his trash on audiences. Instead, she aggressively grabbed Ryan by his puppy-scruff and pushed him back into the mess of his own proposal:

MS. RADDATZ: Do you have the specifics? Do you have the math? Do you know exactly what you're doing?

So now the ball is in Ryan's court. The answer he gives is astounding:

REP. RYAN: Look – look at what Mitt – look at what Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill did. They worked together out of a framework to lower tax rates and broaden the base, and they worked together to fix that. What we're saying is here's our framework: Lower tax rates 20 percent – we raise about \$1.2 trillion through income taxes. We forgo about 1.1 trillion [dollars] in loopholes and deductions. And so what we're saying is deny those loopholes and deductions to higher-income taxpayers so that more of their income is taxed, which has a broader base of taxation –

Three things about this answer:

- 1) Ryan again here refuses to answer Raddatz's yes-or-no question about specifics. So now we know the answer: there are no specifics.
- 2) In lieu of those nonexistent specifics, what Ryan basically says is that he and Romney will set the framework – "Lower taxes by 20 percent" – and then they'll work out the specifics of how to get there with the Democrats in bipartisan fashion.
- 3) So essentially, Ryan has just admitted on national television that the Romney tax plan will be worked out after the election with the same Democrats from whom they are now, before the election, hiding any and all details.

So then, after that, there's this exchange.

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: Can I translate?

REP. RYAN: – so we can lower tax rates across the board. Now, here's why I'm saying this. What we're saying is here's a framework –

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN: I hope I'm going to get time to respond to this.

REP. RYAN: We want to work with Congress –

MS. RADDATZ: I – you'll get time.

REP. RYAN: We want to work with Congress on how best to achieve this. That means successful – look – MS. RADDATZ: No specifics, yeah.

Raddatz did exactly the right thing. She asked a yes-or-no question, had a politician try to run the lamest kind of game on her – and when he was done, she called him on it, coming right back to the question and translating for viewers: "No specifics."

Think about what that means. Mitt Romney is running for president – for *president!* – promising an across-the-board 20 percent tax cut without offering any details about how that's going to be paid for. Forget being battered by the press, he and his little sidekick Ryan should both be tossed off the playing field for even trying something like that. This race for the White House, this isn't some frat prank. This is serious. This is for grownups, for God's sake.

If you're going to offer an across-the-board 20 percent tax cut without explaining how it's getting paid for, hell, why stop there? Why not just offer everyone over 18 a 1965 Mustang? Why not promise every child a Zagnut and an Xbox, or compatible mates for every lonely single person? Sometimes in journalism I think we take the objectivity thing too far. We think being fair means giving equal weight to both sides of every argument. But sometimes in the zeal to be objective, reporters get confused. You can't report the Obama tax plan and the Romney tax plan in the same way, because only one of them is really a plan, while the other is actually not a plan at all, but an electoral gambit.

The Romney/Ryan ticket decided, with incredible cynicism, that that they were going to promise this massive tax break, not explain how to pay for it, and then just hang on until election day, knowing that most of the political press would let it skate, or at least not take a dump all over it when explaining it to the public.

Unchallenged, and treated in print and on the air as though it were the same thing as a real plan, a 20 percent tax cut sounds pretty good to most Americans. Hell, it sounds good to me.

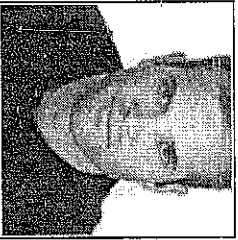
The proper way to report such a tactic is to bring to your coverage exactly the feeling that Biden brought to the debate last night: contempt and amazement. We in the press should be offended by what Romney and Ryan are doing – we should take professional offense that any politician would try to whisk such a gigantic lie past us to our audiences, and we should take patriotic offense that anyone is trying to seize the White House using such transparently childish and dishonest tactics.

I've never been a Joe Biden fan. After four years, I'm not the biggest Barack Obama fan, either (and I'll get into why on that score later). But they're at least credible-as big-league politicians. So much of the Romney/Ryan plan is so absurdly junior league, it's so far off-Broadway, it's practically in New Jersey.

Paul Ryan, a leader in the most aggressively and mindlessly partisan Congress in history, preaching *bipartisanship*? A private-equity parasite, Mitt Romney, who wants to enact a massive tax cut and pay for it without touching his own personal fortune-guaranteeing deduction, the carried-interest tax break – which keeps his own taxes below 15 percent despite incomes above \$20 million?

The Romney/Ryan platform makes sense, and is not laughable, in only one context: if you're a multi-millionaire and you recognize that this is the only way to sell your agenda to mass audiences. But if you're not one of those rooting gazillionaires, you should laugh, you should roll your eyes, and it doesn't matter if you're the Vice President or an ABC reporter or a toll operator. You should laugh, because this stuff is a joke, and we shouldn't take it seriously.

ABOUT MATT TAIBBI



Matt Taibbi is a contributing editor for *Rolling Stone*. He's the author of five books, most recently *The Great Derangement* and *Griftopia*, and a winner of the National Magazine Award for commentary.

FOLLOW



Rolling Stone

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Rolling Stone is a U.S.-based magazine devoted to music, liberal politics and popular culture that is published every two weeks. *Rolling Stone* was founded in San Francisco in 1967 by Jann Wenner, who is still editor and publisher, and music critic, Ralph J. Gleason.

The magazine was known for its political coverage beginning in the 1970s, with the enigmatic and controversial gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson. *Rolling Stone* magazine changed its format in the 1990s to appeal to younger readers,^[2] often focusing on young television or film actors and pop music. This led to criticism that the magazine was emphasizing style over substance.^[3]

In recent years, the magazine has resumed its traditional mix of content, including in-depth political stories. It also has expanded content to include acclaimed coverage of financial and banking issues. As a result, the magazine has seen its circulation increase and its reporters invited as experts to network television programs of note.^[4]



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Ryan Repeats Overstated Claim About People Losing Health Insurance Under Obamacare

Like Mitt Romney during his debate with President Barack Obama last week, Paul Ryan charged during Thursday's debate that health care reform would cause 20 million people to lose their health insurance.

"Look at all the string of broken promises. If you like you health care plan, you can keep it.' Try telling that to the 20 million who are projected to lose their health insurance if Obamacare goes through," Ryan said.

Ryan and Romney both base their claim on a selective reading of a Congressional Budget Office report that predicts the law will extend health insurance coverage to 30 million people. Along the way, 3 million to 5 million people are projected to move from the job-based health benefits they have today to some other form of coverage, such as private health insurance sold on the law's "exchanges" or Medicaid.

The CBO report included alternative calculations that ranged from predicting that Obamacare would actually increase enrollment in job-based health insurance by 3 million, to estimating that 20 million people would lose those benefits, which is the figure Ryan and Romney cherry-picked.

Ryan was on solid ground accusing Obama of breaking his campaign promise to reduce every family's health insurance premiums by \$2,500 a year. In fact, health insurance premiums continue to rise as they have for years, though the rate of increase has slowed. Health care spending growth overall also has slowed. But since the biggest parts of Obama's law don't take effect until 2014, it's probably had little effect on spending or premiums either way to date.

Ryan also said 7.4 million senior citizens would lose the coverage they currently have on private health insurance plans through the Medicare Advantage program because the health care law cuts its funding. While Ryan accurately cited the projections of Medicare's independent actuary, the number of people on Medicare Advantage plans has increased since the law and health insurance companies have said they don't expect this line of business to collapse.

- Jeffrey Young

The Huffington Post

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Huffington Post is an American news website, content aggregator, and blog founded by Arianna Huffington, Kenneth Lerer, Andrew Breitbart,^{[2][3]} and Jonah Peretti, featuring columnists and various news sources.^[4] The site offers news, blogs, and original content, and covers politics, business, entertainment, environment, technology, popular media, lifestyle, culture, comedy, healthy living, women's interest, and local news.

The Huffington Post was launched on May 9, 2005, and is known as a left-leaning commentary outlet, but Arianna Huffington has stated that its goal is to go beyond the traditional liberal/left and conservative/right divide in American politics and news media.^{[5][6][7][8]} On February 7, 2011, AOL acquired the mass market^[9]

Huffington Post for US\$315 million, making Arianna Huffington editor-in-chief of The Huffington Post Media Group.^{[10][11]} In 2012, *The Huffington Post* was the first commercially run, United States digital media enterprise to win a Pulitzer Prize.^[12]

In July 2012, *The Huffington Post* was ranked #1 on the 15 Most Popular Political Sites list by eBizMBA Rank which bases its list off each site's Alexa Global Traffic Rank, and U.S. Traffic Rank from both Comscore and Quantcast.^[13]



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