# Biden and Trump agree to CNN-hosted debate with potential for third-party candidate's participation



On May 15, 2024, President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump agreed to participate in a CNN-hosted debate in Atlanta on June 27. This marks a significant shift in the traditional format of American presidential debates, typically overseen by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) and held in the fall.

The arrangement followed a quick decision by Biden's campaign, which aligned with conditions previously proposed by the President: no live audience and inclusion criteria allowing potentially other candidates to qualify. However, the criteria set by CNN—requiring candidates to meet certain polling thresholds and ballot access in states with 270 electoral votes—left room for independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to potentially qualify.

Despite the agreement, confusion arose over Kennedy's possible participation due to the differing interpretations of the qualification criteria. Biden's camp maintained the debate would remain a one-on-one format with Trump, while Trump expressed indifference about Kennedy's inclusion. Kennedy's campaign, aiming to meet the requirements, began accelerating efforts to secure ballot access and considered legal action to ensure fair treatment.

Biden and Trump have further agreed to a second debate on ABC News on September 10. The CPD, historically managing presidential debates since 1988, continues to prepare for traditional debates later in the year, should the new arrangement falter. Both campaigns presented their conflicting views on who benefited more from the new debate schedule, with Biden's team confident in their strategic advantage and Trump's team emphasizing their success in securing Biden's participation.