



[Vice President Pence and Senator Harris Engage in a V.P. Debate](#)

Vice President Mike Pence and Senator Kamala Harris squared off in the lone vice-presidential debate on Wednesday evening, less than a month before the upcoming election. The debate came amid the backdrop of President Trump testing positive for COVID-19, and questions being raised about future debates during this election cycle due to the president's contraction of the virus. On Thursday morning, the president said he would not be participating in a virtual debate, which means the debate between Harris and Pence is most likely the final one before the election. The event itself was much calmer and more composed than the recent presidential debate between President Trump and former Vice President Biden, with both Harris and Pence largely respecting the rules of the debate and moderator Susan Paige keeping the conversation moving. Among other topics, questions were asked about the United States' response to COVID-19, the economy, and foreign policy.

The first topic of the debate was the Trump administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Senator Harris called the administration's response to the virus "the greatest failure of any presidential administration in the history of our country" and emphasized on multiple occasions that the death toll of over 210,000 could have been significantly smaller had the administration not downplayed the threat of the virus. In defense, Pence pointed to the president's decision to ban travelers from China at the end of January as evidence that he had taken the situation seriously. Pence also asked Harris to stop undermining public confidence in a vaccine approved by the Trump administration, after the senator said she would only take a vaccine if it had been approved by leading medical institutions, not the president.

On the issue of the economy, Vice President Pence attacked the Biden-Harris ticket for allegedly wanting to increase taxes by repealing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, a key part of the president's economic agenda. Biden has previously said that he would repeal that legislation on his first day in office for the tax breaks it gave the uber-wealthy. However, Pence argued that by doing so, Biden would also be raising taxes on all Americans, particularly those in the middle class. In response, Senator Harris pointed to the Biden campaign's economic agenda, which pledged that no American making less than \$400,000 a year would see a tax increase. Vice President Pence also touted the Trump administration's success in bringing manufacturing jobs back from China and accused the Obama-Biden administration of allowing those jobs to leave in the first place.

Moderator Susan Paige also asked the candidates about foreign policy. Senator Harris slammed the Trump administration for betraying American allies and cozying up to dictators in Russia, China, and elsewhere. Harris argued that the administration had allowed international friendships to grow weaker, and abdicated American leadership on the world stage. Vice President Pence countered by arguing that the Trump administration's isolationism had helped it secure better trade deals, forced NATO allies to pay their share of defense costs, and protected American troops by drawing down long wars. Both candidates made the case that their agenda benefited the United States, with Harris supporting a globalist view, and Pence an isolationist perspective.

Overall, the debate was far less combative than the presidential debate between Trump and Biden. Both candidates were guilty of evading the moderator's questions on occasion, but both showed general respect for each other and the rules of the debate. Traditionally, vice presidential debates don't move polling much, although this year could be the exception with the winner of the election set to become the oldest president in American history. Either Harris or Pence could be thrust into the presidency should something happen to either Biden or Trump during their term, which puts a renewed importance on the vice-presidential slot.