FROM THE ARCHIVES

ELECTIONS – DEBATES

EDUCATION

HISTORY TODAY

GRADES 8-12
From the Archives brings primary source documents and exploration into the classroom. These educational resources, carefully curated by our Education team, are meant to enhance historical discussions around relevant topics of today in history, civics, geography, and economics.

Overview:
“Debates” is a series of documents related to the Reagan campaign’s efforts to prepare for the Presidential Debates in September and October of 1980. The first debate, which featured Governor Reagan and Congressman John B. Anderson but did not feature President Carter, took place on September 21, 1980 in Baltimore, MD. The second debate, which was between Governor Reagan and President Carter, took place on October 28, 1980 in Cleveland, OH, just a week before Election Day. Primary Source A is a memo from Richard Wirthlin to key members of President Reagan’s staff, about strategy for the debate against John B. Anderson. It speaks about what Governor Reagan should attempt to demonstrate in the debates, and some of the general style that Governor Reagan should aim to emulate. Primary Source B is a critique of the first debate, outlining the goals achieved in the debate, how Governor Reagan did in various categories and what he can do to improve for the next debate. Primary Source C is another memo from Richard Wirthlin, outlining more general strategy for the second debate, this time with President Carter. It lists several of President Carter’s potential attack strategies, and how Governor Reagan should respond if those attacks are used. The general goal of this debate for the Reagan campaign was to reinforce the idea that Governor Reagan wanted to serve the American people, and that he will bring the nation back to “its proper bearings”. Finally, Primary Source D is another document which contains several tips and hints for Governor Reagan going into the second debate. It includes five points, including Symbols, the Economy, War and Peace, Framing the Pre-Debate and Framing the Post-Debate. This document especially shows the care that went into the planning before the debates and how much the Reagan-Bush campaign cared about effectively communicating to the American people.

Suggested Classroom Activities:

1. What Should a Candidate Demonstrate in a Debate?
   - Using Primary Source A, C, and D, instruct students to make a list of things that they think are important for a candidate to demonstrate in a Presidential debate. In addition to Primary Source A, show the students a few clips from past Presidential Debates and allow the students to take notes on what is effective and what is not.
     - Highlights of 2012 Debate (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAi4wCfcCPU)
     - Make or Break Debate Moments (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Y8SZDH3B_4)
   - Many of the items in the primary sources are specific to the 1980 Presidential Election, but students will be able to make broad connections between themes of the campaign’s debate strategy. This classroom activity is good preparation for the debate in which students participate in the “Road to the White House” curriculum.

2. Summary Critique of Presidential Debates
   - Using Primary Source B, students will critique the performance of a specific candidate in a Presidential debate. Review the choices from the links below, and allow the students to choose one. Alternatively, students may use any other video of a Presidential debate that they can find.
     - Reagan/Anderson 1980 Debate (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiAf2Ch9QbM)
     - Reagan/Carter 1980 Debate (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YxFc_1b_0)
     - Reagan/Mondale 1984 Debate #1 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGvBFQPRXs)
     - Reagan/Mondale 1984 Debate #2 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF73k5-Higg)
     - Clinton/Dole 1996 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFw18HHbS5U)
     - Romney/Obama 2012 Debate #1 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62vqSb4YQOE)
     - Romney/Obama 2012 Debate #2 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BTk2bKJ6ul)
   - After they have watched the debate, students should critique the debate, modeling their analysis on the format found in Primary Source B. The students will list achievements by the candidate in that debate, how the debate could have hurt the candidate, and what they could do to improve in the future.
MEMORANDUM

TO: Bill Casey, Jim Baker, Ed Meese, Myles Martel, Dave Gergen
FROM: Richard Wirthlin
DATE: September 5, 1980
RE: DEBATE STRATEGY

Attached are what we feel represent the major strategy objectives we should keep in mind as we prepare for the debates.
Reagan & Bush

Reagan Bush Committee
901 South Highland Street, Arlington, Virginia 22204 (703) 685-3400

MEMORANDUM

TO: Richard B. Wirthlin
FROM: Richard Smith Beal
DATE: September 5, 1980
RE: Debates

What Do We Want To Demonstrate in the Debates?

- Exhibit grace under fire.
- Demonstrate the competency to deal with the complexity and range of national issues.
- Allow voters to compare the style of the Governor in contrast with Carter and Anderson, and reinforce the leadership image of the Governor.
- Show the Governor is capable of giving direct, understandable answers to questions from the panel and policy statements on the issues.
- Re-focus the theme of the campaign on the cutting issue of the election,--the economy, and show the contrast between Carter's uncertain and lackluster performance with regard to inflation and unemployment in contrast to what Governor Reagan is proposing.
- Show judgment and clarity about what the future holds for America; emphasize the positive in contrast to the mediocrity of the current Administration.
- Counter the dangerous and bellicose image of the Governor on national security affairs by stressing the peace through a margin of safety theme.
- Emphasize that the issue agenda in this country has not changed in some time: the 1980 issues are inflation, unemployment and the economy generally. Every other issue, while important, has a secondary status in the minds of the public.
- The political objective is to solidify the Republican and conservative vote while portraying the Governor's stands on the issues and general approach to governing the country as
positioned to allow the middle-income, middle-educated, mid-aged and centrist everything American.

- Unless there is a blunder, the public will not carry away a specific issue impression about the candidates because of the debates. The voters will have a general impression about the Governor, not an issue specific impression unless the voter is a single issue voter. Hence, what the Governor must do in each answer is give the public the sense of his general approach to the presidency and his management of the country.

- The political commentators after the debate and the press generally will determine who wins or loses the debate. They are an audience distinct from the public audience. They will be focusing on style of delivery, clarity, ease and appearance of the candidates and the overall quality of the candidates' responses.

- It is necessary in the debate to give the press and the commentators something to "think" about, as they make their "win-loss" evaluation.

Questions of Style

- The Governor is perceived to be a leader, but it will be important that in the debates he comes across as less distant, more sympathetic, more caring and more understanding.

- Show the Governor is capable of laughing and enjoying a laugh.

- Keep answers short even on complex issues. Where more involved answers are required, it will help the audience if the Governor divides the answer into three more fundamental and direct points that are easy to remember.

- Remember the Governor is a stronger personality than Carter. Do not over-coach the Governor and constrict his natural on-camera presence.
September 30, 1980

To: Jim Baker
    Bill Carruthers
    Dave Gergen
    Frank Hodsall
    Ed Meese
    Dick Wirthlin

From: Myles Martel

Subject: Summary Critique of Reagan-Anderson Debate, September 21, 1980

Goals:

The debate was a positive campaign event, helping us to achieve the objectives we articulated during the debate preparation process. Specifically, it:

1. Projected the Governor as Presidential—as a reasonable, fair, intelligent human being.
2. Conveyed the impression that the Governor's issue positions were responsible (as opposed to radical).
3. Placed the "gaffe" image at a reasonably comfortable distance behind him.
4. Reinforced Anderson's candidacy at least to a modest extent.
5. Portrayed Jimmy Carter negatively for refusing to debate.

The Governor, however, did not adequately "paint" Anderson to the left of Carter, nor did he attack Carter enough.

Format:

The format was advantageous to the Governor in that it:

- precluded follow-up questions which could have resulted in a glaring informational/issue deficiency or gaffe.
- was restricted to only six questions which limited likelihood of dangers specified above.
- provided for restatement of the question which helped prevent memory loss (although it reinforced at least to a degree the Governor's obligation to be responsive).
The format could have been of greater benefit if:

- opening addresses were included. An opening address would have given the Governor a greater opportunity to control the tone of the debate through early exposition of his themes and issue positions.

The Question and Answer process is generally less conducive to accomplishing this purpose.

The Governor’s Image

For the most part the Governor projected himself as Presidential, avoiding stridency and undue contentiousness while projecting a strong non-defensive refutational style. Through an engaging, warm tone, buttressed by an empathic identification with the preeminent problems facing Americans, he defused widespread perceptions that he is dangerous, replacing them with perceptions that he is reasonable and caring.

While John Anderson's command of and clear articulation of the issues was impressive, his emphasis pattern was awkward (he emphasized words disproportionately to their importance). This projected more force than the occasion required and became tedious, thereby highlighting the assets of the Governor's style.

The Governor’s reference to Anderson as "John" downplayed his contentiousness and stressed a commanding yet friendly manner, especially when juxtaposed against Anderson's tendency to refer to the Governor as "Governor Reagan," "My Opponent," and "Sir."

The Governor also struck a pleasing contrast to Anderson by reducing complex economic and military positions to simple (but not simplistic) principles without forsaking well-selected substantiation.

Attacks

The Governor had more latitude to attack Carter than he took (acknowledging the concern he skillfully exercised in attempting to prevent voter backlash).

Why the Governor did not attack Carter's record more needs to be analyzed. Was it because he, by nature, finds it difficult to attack? Is it because he is more prone to attack after being attacked?

Whatever the case, I recommend that he should be given attack lines if the debate process continues.

As implied earlier, I feel that the Governor should have attempted to identify Anderson more closely to Kennedy's ideology. The few attacks he did direct against Anderson were, however, appropriate and reasonably cogent.

Handling Carter's Absence

The removal of the "empty chair," I feel, did not pose a significant problem. In fact, if it were there, it might have augmented the backlash potential favoring Carter; it might have been regarded as a cheap shot—as non-Presidential.
Carter's absence was neither overplayed nor underplayed by Reagan or Anderson. Both handled this strategically significant issue well. Anderson covered it well at the beginning; both referred to it explicitly during the Questions and Answers; and Reagan handled it masterfully during his close.

Use of Evidence

The Governor's use of evidence came very close—although not quite close enough—to the standard I had in mind. He demonstrated facile command of quantitative information which the audience could understand without overdoing it. His effectiveness in relying on such support was partially rooted in his ability to keep the argument he was making clear.

The Governor's reinforcement of his economic policy by merely referring to "leading economists" was skillful. Greater specificity here might have projected defensiveness or might have drawn heavier attack from Anderson.

Anderson's references to the Harvard and Princeton studies were well-advised. If there are more debates, I would recommend that the Governor refer to such studies. The principal purpose of such citations is to enhance the voter's perception of his knowledgeability and intelligence more than to reinforce an argument.

Refutational Style

The Governor projected strength and intelligence (but not precision) when refuting Anderson or defending his own positions or record. His recoup after Anderson's attack of his California record was particularly strong, buttressed by his reference to the San Francisco Chronicle. His lead into this defense re Anderson's manipulation of the facts may be regarded by some as too strident. I feel, however, that the strength and confidence projected by this brief display of righteous indignation outweighed the downside risks.

Note: John F. Kennedy, Third Debate, October 13, 1960: "I don't think it is possible for Mr. Nixon to state the record in distortion of the facts with more precision than he just did."

Responsiveness

The Governor did a good-to-excellent job in avoiding most of the "mines" planted in the panelists' questions. His response to the last question, however, was convoluted and unduly polarizing.

I recommend that the Governor be rebriefed on the elements of this question as soon as conveniently possible.

In most instances the Governor used the available time well without giving the impression that he was padding his answers. (Time Study attached.) The military school example used to fill one of the time segments is the only notable exception. And that, although irrelevant to the body of his response, was, to an extent, a welcomed respite from the task-oriented flow of the debate—a break which projected his humanity, reasonableness and patriotism.
George Bush

Anderson's reference to the "Anderson/Lucey ticket" was a good idea. If the debate process continues, I recommend not only references to the "Reagan/Bush ticket" but also the selling of Ambassador Bush's credentials. Doing so could be particularly helpful in states like Pennsylvania, where Bush's standing is stronger than Reagan's.

Closing Address

The closing address communicated well the Governor's sense of history, patriotism, humanity and hope for the future. I felt, however, that a sweeping attack against Carter's record should have been interjected during an early portion of this address. I also question whether the line "shining city on a hill" projected him more as a dreamer than a realist. I feel that the Tom Paine quote adequately made his point.

Notes: Before the debate I was under the impression that the candidates would not be permitted to take notes to the lectern. If this is correct, two problems surfaced in this regard:

1. Bill Moyers did not refer to a ground rule re notes in his introduction, despite Bill Carruthers attempt to accomplish this.

2. Anderson referred throughout the debate to at least three file folders and virtually read his closing address.

Dress

The Governor was reasonably well dressed for the event. I was pleased that he did not wear a bright red tie (as he did in Houston, I believe) and that his suit did not come off as black (as it did in Houston). I maintain that the handkerchief should have been removed from his breast pocket and that more of his shirt collar should show (per my August 27 memo).

Major Recommendations
(if there are more debates)

1. Establish an issues briefing program for the Governor (regardless of whether or not there are more debates).

2. Try to replicate as much as possible (acknowledging campaigning constraints) the preparation circumstances leading up to the September 21 debate. (It was reasonably thorough; the team was compatible; the Governor appeared receptive.)

3. Attempt to present the Governor with issue summary sheets (as prepared by Dave Gergen) as far in advance as possible. The Governor apparently studied at least the sheet on urban problems, for it was well reflected in his response to Lee May's question.
4. Organize wherever possible debate task force meetings to review and critique each session with the Governor.

5. The post-debate surrogate effort was a real plus. Surrogates should be briefed in advance on the Governor’s image and substance goals.
MEMORANDUM

TO: Reagan/Bush Campaign
FROM: Richard B. Wirthlin
DATE: October 21, 1980
RE: Reagan-Carter Debate Strategy

Campaign and Debate Axiom

If the Governor succeeds Tuesday in making Jimmy Carter's record the major issue of the debate and the campaign, we will succeed in the debate and win the general election.

If, however, Carter makes Ronald Reagan the issue of the debate and the campaign, we will lose both.

The above axiom holds because the major debate task turns on enhancing Ronald Reagan's perceived trustworthiness.

- Simply, if voters believe Ronald Reagan is more worthy of their trust after the debate than they did before, his vote support will expand and strengthen.

- This can be accomplished if the debate focuses on Carter's incompetence and weak record in office, and Reagan's compassion. Neither position can be reinforced when the Governor defends past positions.

Target Audience and the Voter Turnout Objective

The target audience consists of a key segment of the American vote--Republicans and ticket-splitters. It is these voters, not the panel and certainly not Carter the Governor is addressing.

- The Governor has already built a coalition large enough to win the presidential election, and hence, we want to use this debate to reinforce our base and motivate them to turn out on election day.
Our empirical studies show that if we increase the turnout of our voters by 2% over Carter’s, it increases our electoral margin by 30 electoral votes.

The campaign strategy has been to deal initially to our Republican and conservative base, then to broaden our appeal, and finally to return to the base during these last two weeks of the campaign.

- The surveys show that we need, at this juncture, to increase our appeal among Republicans and ideologically moderate ticket-splitters who need to be reinforced through the Governor's debate performance.

- In answering the questions during the debate, the Governor must remember that ticket-splitters are solution oriented, somewhat skeptical and more interested in the issues and public policy than the image traits of the candidates.

These voters will respond to references to the "Nine Steps" in the Governor’s peace strategy with the three critical elements of the "Strategy for Economic Growth." It is extremely important to avoid references to "Republicans and Democrats" or "I am a conservative" because ticket-splitters are non-partisans who are put-off by these words.

The Anderson debate helped, generally, to broaden our political base. Today the Reagan vote is larger, more committed and includes more segments of the voting population than does Carter's. Carter's base remains very fluid and uncertain.

The debate should help to solidify further the Reagan base and motivate them to turn out on election day. Only 22% of the electorate are self-identified Republicans, hence without the support of these ticket-splitters the Governor could not be elected.

Major Advantages

The principal advantages the Governor maintains going into this debate are:

- He has already debated six times before in this campaign and is more accustomed to such events.

- He is the best electronic media candidate in history.

- He will appear robust and vigorous by comparison to Carter who will likely appear bleached out and tense.
Principal Strategic Objectives

Televized political debates focus on image attributes more than issue positions. The image attributes we need to reinforce are:

- Competence
- Compassion
- Reasonableness, moderation, and thoughtfulness
- Strength

Essentially, the debate objective is:

Present Ronald Reagan as a reasonable and compassionate man with a vision of America and the competence to take us from simply providing the hope that vision conveys to its actualization.

How is this objective achieved?

Carter's attack strategy will undoubtedly try to represent Reagan's policies as "naive, unrealistic, anachronistic, and Alice-in-Wonderlandish." In response to this attack, the Governor has an excellent opportunity to show constraint, thoughtfulness and strength. And, when the attack becomes overblown, he should use disarming humor which will build both rapport and trust with the electorate.

It is essential for the Governor to use his answers to show that he is aware of different sides of the issues, that they are complex and that only after thoughtful consideration has he settled on a particular policy-orientation. In response to the Carter attacks that "he has flip-flopped," the Governor can use such attacks to demonstrate reasonableness and the lack of policy rigidity.

Carter's Attack Strategy

Exploit Reagan's flip-flops.

Make extensive use of Reagan quotes, e.g. during Democratic Convention.

Attack the Reagan California record and how Reagan has "distorted it."

Reagan's Response Strategy

Use changes to show reasonableness; defend public policy changes because circumstances have changed.

Counter with Carter and Kennedy quotes; avoid unnecessarily strident reactions; bring the discussion back to the Carter record.

Defend with confidence and indignation moving as quickly as possible back to the Carter record as the real issue; avoid unnecessary stridency; counter with "when Governor Carter approached this problem in his state, the record shows..." but the real issue of this is the Carter record which show he still hasn't been able to solve the
Carter's Attack Strategy

Attack Reagan's ideas as "quick fixes" that are unrealistic and even unworkable.

Suggest Reagan would be a dangerous man in the White House.

Reagan's Response Strategy

problems and maintain presidential tone and demeanor; act humored by Carter California record attacks—he doesn't understand the problems of California anymore than of the nation.

Given the Carter record, the Carter Administration is incapable of evaluating what would work or not work; argue most Carter policies are in place for such a short time before Mr. Carter changes his mind that their only impact is a quick fix.

Respond with righteous indignation; no one wants peace more than I, after all, what reasonable person would not; the difference between Mr. Carter and I is my commitment to deter conflict by being economically and militarily strong, and pursuing a consistent foreign policy; uncertainty in our foreign policy is more apt to cause an international crisis that would result in war, than to have a strong economy and military.

Several general points should be followed in the Governor's response strategy during the debate.

- It is not necessary to answer or respond to each of Carter's charges.

- It is especially important that the Governor be prepared for Carter's distortions of the California record. A good response to much of what Carter will say in this regard is something the Governor has already said: "You know, it's one thing when the Carter Administration jimmies its own economic figures to make its record look good, but when Mr. Carter starts jimmying my figures, that's going too far."

- The bottom line on the California record is that Californians were better off after the Governor's two terms of office, than this country is after four years of Jimmy Carter.
The Governor's responses must appear confident and strong, not strident.

Reagan Attack Strategy

The Governor should use his answers to remind the public of:

- Carter, instead of leading the people to greater peace and prosperity, was content to declare there was a malaise in the country and that it would not matter who was President the economy would be just as bad.

- Carter has failed to provide a steady hand at the helm, especially in foreign policy. We have very little support from our allies and largely undeveloped and fragmented policies toward our adversaries.

- Carter has been indecisive, and unwilling to pursue vigorously domestic and international policies.

- More than any previous administration, the Carter Administration has politicized the cabinet and compromised the non-partisan functions of the Departments of State and Defense.

Tactics and Special Considerations

- Emphasize strength and decisiveness while avoiding stridency. Anderson's stridency hurt him in the previous debate.

- Use of a combination of Mister and President. Carter with more frequent use of Mr. President.

- Remember the debate is between Ronald Reagan the candidate for President, and Jimmy Carter the candidate for the same office. When making references to the 1976 campaign, use "Jimmy Carter."

- Compassion is most easily communicated by referring to situations during the course of campaign experiences.

- Make use of the voter appeal of George Bush by referencing consultations and policy discussions with him.

- Avoid unnecessary references to "the past" and buzz words that alienate blocs of voters, e.g. "detente."
Reagan: Competence and Compassion

The man who will be the President of the United States for the next four years is:

The man who correctly identifies the nation's most pressing problems, and has the drive and ability to resolve them compassionately.

- What the American people want most is leadership in the White House that will give them hope that the country is heading in a direction that will mean greater security and prosperity.

- They are tired of pessimism and the acquiescence to mediocrity. But they are equally wary of political promises by office seekers who are not truly committed to the welfare of the people.

- Americans are looking for specific policy options such as those enumerated in the two speeches—"Strategy for Peace" and "Strategy for Economic Growth," which will already be given by the time of the debate. The Governor should not hesitate to repeat the steps outlined in each.

The Governor must communicate to the American people through his answers that it is the people's interests he intends to serve. The people say the thing that is killing them is inflation, and a weak economy. What will restore this country to its proper bearings is a president committed to reducing inflation and improving the economy.
October 21, 1980

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bill Casey
    Ed Meese
    Jim Baker

FROM: Rich Williamson

REGARDING: The Debate

I am sure you are being bombarded with gratuitous advice -- much of it useless, and the few good ideas probably ones you have thought of long ago. I apologize for being presumptuous and wading into these waters. Nonetheless, a few thoughts for your consideration.

1) SYMBOLS -- NOT DEBATE POINTS: Often in preparing for a debate type confrontation, a candidate is overwhelmed with facts. While it is important that the candidate be able to recite some facts in order to give the impression that he is knowledgeable about the issues, facts per se are not important in political persuasion.

    The voter has a mosaic of impressions about each candidate. These impressions sway him. And the more vivid impressions are not facts, statistics, literal arguments. Rather the more vivid and persuasive impressions are images and symbols.

    The voter wants to know whether a given candidate shares the individual voter's concerns, experiences, and hopes. Candidate Jimmy Carter in 1976 was a master at conveying the impression of shared experience with the swing voter (farmer, small businessman, family man, small town main street America
values, church-goer).

Our polls show the voters think Ronald Reagan is a strong leader. They think he is best able to lead us to economic recovery. But they do not seem to associate images with Ronald Reagan that counter their general bias against conservative Republicans as lacking compassion, being trigger happy, being more concerned with balance sheets than health care for the elderly.

Our biggest asset in countering that image is letting voters see Ronald Reagan. To watch him is to like him. His decency, reasonableness and kindness are self-evident when one watches him on television. The debate will provide intense exposure for him and those who see him to be reassured. That plus should be reinforced and accentuated by having Governor Reagan personalize his responses, show shared experiences, project common concerns.

For example, in talking about Social Security, Welfare or the Economy generally, Ronald Reagan should let voters know that he himself has experienced the hardships of a bad economy. During the depression his father was fired and without a job! His father worked for the WPA! Those are powerful images. Here is a man who knows "economic insecurity." Here is a man who knows how government can constructively help the truly needy. He is not just some wealthy country club Republican with white shoes, white belt and a martini in his hand. Similarly, during the debates Governor Reagan should seek out an opportunity to say he is a former union president. And when addressing the "war and peace" issue he should say he has sons
and a grandson; he too worries about their safety; he too has a powerful personal reason to work for a lasting framework of peace . . . etc.

II) THE ECONOMY: The economy and Jimmy Carter’s failed Presidency are the strongest Reagan issues. “War and peace” is Mr. Carter’s issue. If people vote on the economy, we win; if they vote on war and peace, we may lose. Governor Reagan should focus his responses to questions towards constant referrals to the ailing economy and Jimmy Carter’s responsibility for high inflation and high unemployment. To the extent possible, statements should not be in terms of billions of dollars and millions of jobs; but in supermarket food basket terms. It is a simple equation, who watching the debate feels better off today than four years ago? Can they afford four more years? Ronald Reagan offers a return to prosperity.

III) WAR AND PEACE – (SALT II): Governor Reagan should focus on his powerful personal reasons for seeking peace. As mentioned above, he should cite his sons and his grandson whom he never wants to see forced to take up arms. Further, he should dismiss SALT II questions with prompt dispatch by reiterating that like so many Senators – many Democratic – he knows SALT II is fatally flawed, not in our national interest. He will not embrace a flawed treaty however politically expedient it may be. But nothing is more important to him than building a lasting framework for peace. And with the help of the bipartisan Senate leadership and such advisors as Henry Kissinger and Vice President George Bush he will work tirelessly for a meaningful workable SALT III treaty.
IV) **FRAMING THE PRE-DEBATE:** I think you are 100% correct in seeking to position us that Carter is reluctant to debate. Also, you are correct to posture us as expecting Carter to win the debate given his unique access to facts, figures, etc. due to his position of incumbency. A further point that might be made with the press -- and one I think is correct -- is that politically Ronald Reagan does not have to win the debate. He just has to hold his own and be reassuring. The burden of proof on the challenger is lower than the burden of proof on an incumbent President. Further, Governor Reagan will enter the debate with a strong electoral college lead. He is not seeking to win converts so much as to reassure his substantial base.

V) **FRAMING THE POST-DEBATE:** Obviously the importance of this event warrants a full court press to get out our line on the debate outcome. A program was developed and well executed under Cliff White and Bob Gray for the Baltimore John Anderson - Ronald Reagan debate. I assume a similar program is being set up for this debate and that someone is coordinating it. I urge we pull out all stops to get the big guns at the debate site (Kissinger, Simon, et al). I further suggest that in our key states we have the Republican Governors host debate viewing parties at their respective Executive Mansions inviting key state figures and the local media. Where possible MCs and Senators in those key states could have similar events in various media markets. The result would be mini-media events that would provide a vehicle to get out our line of a Reagan debate victory.

cc: Senator Paul Laxalt
About Us
The Walter and Leonore Annenberg Presidential Learning Center (APLC) at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation is committed to engaging the future leaders of America in the study of our nation’s democratic process with the aim of developing proactive informed, educated, and conscientious citizens and leaders.

Programs
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Contact Us: 40 Presidential Drive, Simi Valley, California 93065 • 805.522.2977 • aplc@reaganfoundation.org