



Hold your own **ROCK THE VOTE** DebateWatch Party

In Conjunction with



COMMISSION ON PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

The 2008 election has generated almost unprecedented interest in the upcoming debates, and everyone has an opinion on the candidates and the issues. Hosting your own Rock the Vote DebateWatch Party is an easy and fun way to get more involved in the national dialogue while speaking out on the things you care about. It's also a great excuse to get together with your friends and talk about the election without any spin from the media or the candidates. You might even change your mind about a few things!

Anyone can host a DebateWatch party – just pick a place with a TV and invite some friends over. Check out the “how to” below for some tips and create your own Rock the Vote DebateWatch Party at <http://www.rockthevote.com/act-out/events/>.

Hold a Rock the Vote Event

Rock the Vote has made it simple for anyone around the country to make their effort a Rock the Vote effort. Kick your event off right and license the Rock the Vote logo. This will give you permission to use the Rock the Vote name and logo on co-branded event materials and advertise *your* event with our name. Once your application has been approved, you're ready to go!

Rock the Vote is a nonpartisan organization. This means that we do not support or endorse candidates, nor do we participate in any activities that could benefit one party over another. There are many laws governing our work as a nonpartisan organization and we take our nonpartisanship seriously. *We cannot approve use of our logo for any partisan effort.*

To request the Rock the Vote logo, fill out the form at: <http://www.rockthevote.com/act-out/logo-request/>.

Take Action

Don't just watch the debates – get involved! The first presidential debate and the vice presidential debate are scheduled before the majority of voter registration deadlines across the country. Make sure everyone that attends your DebateWatch party is registered to vote by having paper registration forms on hand or a laptop aimed at <http://www.rockthevote.com>.

Take advantage of the **RTV Action Center** on Facebook. This phonebanking tool lets you call people that have downloaded a voter registration form but haven't sent it in yet. Take a half hour before the debate starts to have everyone at your party make some calls and get people registered. Get the Action Center at: <http://apps.new.facebook.com/rtvaction/>.

Want to ask the next President of the United States a question? The Commission on Presidential Debates has partnered with MySpace to present <http://www.mydebates.org>, an official online component to the 2008 presidential debates. Talk about the issues that are important to you at your



DebateWatch event, then submit a question at <http://www.mydebates.org> for possible inclusion in the town hall debate on October 7.

Have something to say about the debates? You can Twitter your comments to Current TV and share them with viewers across the country. Just include "#current" in your tweets. Get more information at: http://current.com/topics/88834922_hack_the_debate

Schedule

Here's the schedule for all of the 2008 presidential and vice presidential debates:

First Presidential Debate	Friday, September 26, 2008	9:00PM – 10:30PM EST
Vice Presidential Debate	Thursday, October 2, 2008	9:00PM – 10:30PM EST
Second Presidential Debate	Tuesday, October 7, 2008	9:00PM – 10:30PM EST
Third Presidential Debate	Wednesday, October 15, 2008	9:00PM – 10:30PM EST

Each debate will be 90 minutes in length and administered by a single moderator. The first debate will focus on domestic policy. The second debate will be a town hall meeting that includes any topic raised by members of the audience. The third debate will focus on foreign policy. The vice presidential debate will cover both foreign and domestic policy.

Before the Debate

- Invite your friends and classmates about a week before the debate. Try creating a Facebook event page so you can keep track of everyone that is attending. And don't forget to make it an official Rock the Vote event by posting the details at <http://www.rockthevote.com/act-out/events/>.
- Set the start time for at least an hour before the debate is scheduled to begin – this will give everyone plenty of time to get acquainted. It also leaves plenty of time to fire up the RTV Action Center (<http://apps.new.facebook.com/rtvaction/>) on Facebook and get people registered to vote!
- Think about food. While not a total necessity, free food will help guarantee a crowd. Try making it a potluck – ask each person to bring one item, like chips, cookies, etc.

Night of the Debate

- Arrange seating in the room so that everyone can see the TV easily. Keeps pens and papers handy in case anyone wants to take notes during the debate.
- Once everyone is settled, have people introduce themselves.
- Turn the TV on about five minutes before the debate starts but leave the volume off until it actually begins.



After the Debate

- Turn the TV off when the debate ends – avoid the pundits! – and take a short break.
- If there are more than 12 people at your party, break into smaller groups for discussion.
- Remind everyone that the night is about discussion and there are no right or wrong opinions.
- Start the conversation off by asking some of the questions listed below. Encourage others to ask questions.
- After about an hour (or when the discussion naturally ends), give everyone a chance to make any last comments and then wrap up.

Possible Discussion Questions

Here are a few questions to help get the discussion started at your event. Once you get your group going, you may find you don't need them!

General Questions:

- Why did you decide to participate in DebateWatch?
- What did you learn about the candidates or issues that you didn't know before?
- What topics or issues discussed were most useful or informative?
- Were there any issues raised that you considered irrelevant or unimportant?
- What issues would you like to see addressed in future debates?

Questions about DebateWatch to be asked at the end of the session:

- Will participating in this discussion affect the way you read, watch, or discuss the election?
- Will participating in DebateWatch influence or change the way you vote in the election?

Questions for the second, third, or vice presidential debates:

- What did you learn from this debate that you didn't learn from the previous debates?
- Did you prefer the town hall style of debate or the more traditional format?
- How, if at all, did the press coverage of the previous debate influence your attitudes about the candidates or the issues in this debate?
- What did you learn from the vice presidential debate that was different from the presidential debate?

DebateWatch on Campus

Dorms and school campuses are perfect locations for DebateWatch parties. Here are a couple of ideas for hosting an event at your college or university:

- Work with your school to throw a campus-wide DebateWatch party at an auditorium or other location with a large screen or multiple TVs. Then, break into smaller groups of 6-12 for discussion. Make a night of it by soliciting local restaurants to provide free food and inviting a local band to play before the debate starts.
- Get your event on the student activities board calendar.



ROCK THE VOTE

- Talk to your campus' Greek organizations, athletic teams, or other groups to throw a DebateWatch party as a community service project.
- Find the political junkies at your school by promoting your event to the student government and the local chapters of the College Democrats/Republicans.
- Tap into your campus media – the student newspaper, the college radio station, etc.
- Encourage professors to incorporate DebateWatch into their curricula (extra credit!).
- Use DebateWatch to talk about the issues important to students and young people, such as education and jobs.

Now that you have all of the information you need for a successful DebateWatch party, get out there and do it! And make sure to submit your story and pictures to Rock the Vote at <http://www.rockthevote.com/act-out/>.

Source

"Guide to Hosting a DebateWatch" by the Commission on Presidential Debates