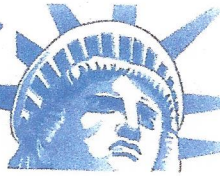


National Legal and Policy Center

"promoting ethics in public life"



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Since 1991

October 20, 2020

Commission on Presidential Debates
Attn Co-chairs
Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr.
Dorothy S. Ridings
Kenneth Wollack
Executive Director Janet H. Brown
Commission on Presidential Debates
1200 New Hampshire Ave, NW #445
Washington, DC 20036

Re: Rescind Kristen Welker as Debate Moderator

Dear Members of the Commission:

The National Legal and Policy Center (NLPC) hereby requests that the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) immediately rescind its selection of NBC's Kristen Welker as moderator for the final presidential debate scheduled for October 22, 2020, and select instead a nonpartisan moderator who has not fabricated quotes by President Donald Trump, one of the participants in the debate.

Founded in 1991, NLPC promotes ethics in public life and government accountability through research, investigation, education and legal action. www.nlpc.org. More particularly, NLPC filed a complaint against Ms. Welker on August 11, 2020, for fabricating a quote from President Trump at a White House press conference regarding the shooting that occurred on the White House grounds as discussed herein.

According to the CPD's website:

How are the Debate Moderators Chosen? *The moderators are selected by the CPD several weeks before the debates. The CPD uses three criteria to select its moderators: a) familiarity with the candidates and the major issues of the presidential campaign; b) extensive experience in live television broadcast news; and c) an understanding that the debate should focus maximum time and attention on the candidates and their views. The moderators alone select the questions to be asked, which are not known to the CPD or to the candidates.*

<https://www.debates.org/about-cpd/overview/>

Remarkably, **none** of the criteria for selecting a moderator includes one that the moderator should have a reputation for being neutral or nonpartisan in political matters, or at least appear nonpartisan with respect to the two major candidates running for President.

Behind closed doors, on September 2, 2020, the Debate Commission selected the moderators, including Kristen Welker, who was a moderator along with Rachel Maddow in one of the Democratic primary debates.

As news reports have revealed, Ms. Welker's family are major donors to the Democratic party and Ms. Welker posted on her Facebook a photo of her and her father posing with the Obamas at a 2012 Christmas party. The Obamas are actively campaigning for Joe Biden. Moreover, "Welker briefly deactivated her Twitter account Friday [October 16, 2020] on the heels of C-SPAN's Steve Scully, who was supposed to moderate the cancelled second presidential debate, being put on administrative leave after he lied about a tweet sent to Trump critic Anthony Scaramucci asking for advice." <https://nypost.com/2020/10/18/trump-rips-extraordinarily-unfair-moderator-kristen-welker/>

Just as Steve Scully, the Commission's hand-picked moderator for the second debate, was reprimanded by his employer for lying about a tweet he sent, and thus was disqualified from being a moderator had it not been cancelled for other reasons, so too, Kristen Welker should have been reprimanded by NBC for making up a quote from President Trump about his reaction to the August 10 shooting on the White House grounds. As described in NLPC's complaint to NBC and Ms. Welker the next day,

Kristen Welker, White House Correspondent for NBC News asked the following question at the 6:57 minute mark of the press conference

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4z7An4eb7xE>

Q. Kristen Welker: "Are you rattled at all by this Mr. President?"

A. President Trump: "I don't know, do I seem rattled?"

*Shortly after the press conference, Ms. Welker appeared on MSNBC to report about the shooting incident and said: "I asked the President if he was rattled by all of this, **he said "of course,"** but he also expressed his gratitude to the Secret Service." A videoclip of her statement is posted at nlpc.org. Anyone watching President Trump's calm and subdued demeanor would conclude that he was not rattled by shooting as Ms. Welker falsely led MSNBC viewers to believe.*

<https://nlpc.org/?s=kristen+welker&x=5&y=9>

Neither Ms. Welker nor NBC has apologized for this clear example of "fake news" that undermines her integrity and those of her fellow White House correspondents. Yet three weeks after Ms. Welker's fabricated quote, the Commission selected Ms. Welker to be a moderator. Just because NBC has not suspended or reprimanded Ms. Welker for her misconduct does not mean that the Commission's standards of journalistic integrity should be as low as NBC's.

Accordingly, the CPD should immediately rescind its selection of Ms. Welker to be the debate moderator and substitute a nonpartisan moderator, one who has not so blatantly fabricated a quote by the very candidate whose debate is being moderated.

Sincerely,



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