Spotlight on the Second 2012 Presidential Debate

President Obama is clear in his commitment to education, women’s issues, and protecting the middle class. On Tuesday, the 2012 Presidential Debates resumed. Responding to questions from independent voters, the President affirmed: “Your future is bright.” President Obama believes in providing every child access to a complete education. In addition, the President has secured key reforms for affordable federal student loans, and he has capped loan payments to help 1.6 million students reduce their monthly payments. President Obama fought to stop interest rates on student loans from doubling for more than 7 million students, and he has created and expanded a tax credit worth $10,000 over four years of college. His policies expanded access to Pell Grants to help nearly 4 million more students afford college. During Tuesday’s debate, the President pointed out that “when Governor Romney’s campaign was asked about the Lilly Ledbetter bill... He said, ‘I’ll get back to you.’ And that’s not the kind of advocacy that women need in any economy.” In fact, the first law the President signed was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, which restored basic protections against pay discrimination. President Obama has cut taxes for middle class families by $3,600. Reported, the “very wealthiest American households are paying nearly the lowest tax rate in 50 years...But the average tax rate for middle class families has barely budged.” The President said: “My philosophy on taxes has been simple...give middle-class families...some relief. Governor Romney has a different philosophy...when asked: Is it fair for somebody like you, making $20 million a year, to pay a lower tax rate than a nurse or a bus driver, somebody making $50,000 year? ...He said, “Yes, I think that’s fair.”

Romney refutes past statements, remains vague in attempt to sway undecided voters. Mitt Romney opened Tuesday’s debate with new plans for education: “I want to make sure we keep our Pell grant program growing. We’re also going to have our loan program, so that people are able to afford school.” Previously, he argued that “the expansion [of student loans under President Obama] is unsustainable.” Romney has said “don’t expect the government to forgive the debt that you take on,” and has aligned himself with proposals to cut $170 billion from Pell Grants over a decade. As governor, he said he “was able... to get our schools ranked number one in the nation,” although the Los Angeles Times found that “Massachusetts became No. 1 by doing things that Romney now opposes.” For example, Romney vetoed legislation to reduce class sizes. Concerning equal pay for women, Romney described his efforts of amassing “binders full of women” for positions and providing workplace flexibility so women could “be there [home] for making dinner...and being with them [kids] when they get home from school.” Regarding the economy, Romney has promised to slash taxes by 20 percent for all Americans, and eliminate the estate and alternative minimum taxes; notably, repealing the estate tax allows Romney’s heirs to inherit an extra $80 million. Romney says he would pay for these cuts by eliminating various deductions, which he refuses to specify. Researchers find there are not enough deductions to cover Romney’s tax plan without slashing tax deductions for middle-class families. When asked: “How do you differentiate yourself from George W. Bush?” Romney cited his plan to cut taxes. “Their campaign platforms are remarkably similar,” The New York Times confirms.

NEA Believes

The federal government plays a vital role in ensuring equity, including guaranteeing access to great public schools for students. Equity also entails ensuring fair pay to increase women’s economic security, as women’s earnings were only 77.4 percent of men’s in 2010. Additionally, the federal government should not unduly burden state budgets to provide services for those most in need by protecting tax cuts for the wealthy—tax cuts, that if allowed to expire will have little negative impact on job creation or economic growth, economists have found.

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