

Debate Reactions: Biden's Night Criticized by Both Sides

WASHINGTON (AP) – “Oh, Joe.”

That gasp, from patrons at a Chicago bar when President Joe Biden first stumbled verbally in his debate with Donald Trump, spoke for a lot of Americans on Thursday night.

In watch parties, bars, a bowling alley and other venues where people across the country gathered to tune in, Trump supporters, happily, and Biden supporters, in their angst if not dread, seemed to largely agree they had witnessed a lopsided showdown.

I still can't believe this is real. ☐☐

– Robby Starbuck (@robbystarbuck) June 28, 2024

By the end of the 90-plus minutes, some Democrats were saying what partisans say to put the best face on things: It's still early. One debate doesn't necessarily sway the nation. Judge him by what he's done and wants to do, not by how he says things.

But many were let down.

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Biden “just didn't have the spark that we needed tonight,” Rosemarie DeAngelus, a Democrat from South Portland, Maine, said from her watch party at Broadway Bowl. Trump, she said, showed “more spunk or more vigor” even if, in her view, he was telling a pack of lies.

Fellow Biden supporter and bowling alley attendee Lynn Miller, from nearby Old Orchard Beach, said: "It's like somebody gave Trump an Adderall and I don't think they gave Joe one." (The drug is used for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.)

"I've never seen Trump seem so coherent," Miller said. "And I hate to say this, but Joe seemed a little bit off. But I still support him over Trump because Trump lied about every single thing that happened."

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Trump supporters certainly agreed that the difference in energy and coherence between the candidates was striking. Wearing her red MAGA hat at a festive pro-Trump party in the Detroit suburb of Novi, Bonnie Call said of Biden: "He just cannot think on his feet at all. President Trump is just on."

In McAllen, Texas, near the Mexico border, London's Bar & Grill is normally loud on a day close to the weekend, but many patrons were quiet as they absorbed the debate from TV screens. Here, Biden supporters, Trump supporters and undecided voters mingled.

Among them, Vance Gonzales, 40, a moderate Democrat, said the debate convinced him that "we need another Democratic candidate, to be honest, because this is not competitive." He said of Biden: "He's not on point with anything. I think it's disappointing."

Marco Perez, 53, voted for Biden in the last election and voiced frustration with what he was hearing and seeing. "I want to hear more facts, more action as opposed to more finger-pointing, more accusations or false accusations," he said.

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Idaho Abortion Ban Decision Handed Down by Supreme Court

Human rights groups say 36,000 North Koreans defected to South Korea in the last two decades, including Mrs. Son, a former official of the North Korean military. During the great North Korea starvation in 1998, Mrs. Son served in the military, as caretaker of supplies and later as a broadcaster of the Juche, North Korea's propaganda outlet.

She told CBN News, "My father was the provincial governor and bribed the military officer with a pig so I could get in because it was a way we can get food rations and not starve like the rest of the country. But things got bad when my father lost the elections. He became very sick and died. My brother was detained and died of starvation in prison."

In order to survive, Mrs. Son and her mother escaped to China.

"We swam across the Tuman River for two days and bribed the North Korean soldiers and brokers in China. There we found a Christian church who helped us," Mrs. Son said.

After a few months, Chinese police began to trail them. Mrs. Son shared her harrowing experience.

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"My mom noticed the police. She told me to jump out of the van when it stopped. I took off my clothes and shoes and gave to my mom because it was winter time and she needed to be warm. With only my underwear on, I jumped out of the van and eight Chinese police chased me. I was already a Christian but not deep. But I knew it was God who protected me and instructed me to hide and hold onto the under bars of a truck. I got away but my mom was taken back to North Korea. I went back to try to find her only to find out that she suffered and died in prison because she did not deny her Christian faith."

Mrs. Son eventually returned to China where she married a Chinese Christian. Several months later, she was re-captured though this time her husband gave her money to help her escape.

"Right before I was transferred to North Korea, I put all the money, the paper bills in plastic bags and swallowed them so that the soldiers will not see them. A week later, I got them all out. I used this to bribe the soldiers and brokers to go back to China."

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After yet another arrest, Mrs. Son spent 400 days in a North Korean prison under inhumane conditions where once again, she experienced God's help.

"The guard was my friend and he gave me rice. But it was the worst because I had to eat insects to survive. After 400 days, I was released... malnourished and could barely walk. This was when my husband used his Chinese citizenship to get me to South Korea," Mrs. Son recounted.

Once in South Korea, Mrs. Son joined the Seopyoung Church where she grew in her Christian faith. She realized how God saved her miraculously each time she was arrested.

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From Ashes to Awakening: Lighthouse Church's Revival Story

The Supreme Court jumped into the heated debate over experimental transgender procedures on children Monday, agreeing to hear the case as the Biden administration seeks to block state bans on gender-altering attempts.

Twenty-five states have passed bans on gender-altering procedures and several are on hold due to litigation. The case before the high court involves a Tennessee law that prohibits transgender-identifying minors from receiving puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and invasive surgeries.

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The Biden administration and some parents claim the laws

prohibit what they call “life-saving treatment.”

“Yeah, the Department of Justice will absolutely take the position that this is lifesaving care,” Sarah Parshall Perry of the Heritage Foundation told us. “That has been the mantra of this administration from day one of the Biden presidency.”

Perry says the court will be asked to decide if the laws violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.

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“The Supreme Court is going to approach the Equal Protection Clause by making a determination of whether or not sex is the same as gender identity and vice versa. Sex has been considered a quasi-suspect class for purposes of Equal Protection Clause analysis, and that requires a heightened level of judicial scrutiny. But gender identity and transgender status have never held to be the same, especially by the Supreme Court, to be the same as biological sex,” Perry said.

Meanwhile, England and other European nations are backing away from transition procedures on minors after studies showed “weak evidence” that they lead to long-term positive impacts.

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Blasphemy Allegations Land Christian Man in Jail Over Quran Incident

A Catholic man has been jailed in Pakistan after accidentally stepping on pages of the Quran, according to Christian Daily International–Morning Star News.

Dennis Albert, 35, reportedly found himself in legal crosshairs in April after exiting his pull car and inadvertently standing on papers said to have come from the Islamic holy book.

Albert has since been jailed on blasphemy charges. He could face 10 years behind bars for “hurting religious sentiments.”

But it’s the second charge—“defiling the Quran”—that could land him with a sentence of life behind bars.

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The entire legal case against Albert is purportedly based on a passerby’s testimony that he saw him standing on papers belonging to the Quran. The accused’s brother, Imran Albert, told Christian Daily International–Morning Star News what he believes actually unfolded.

“My brother says that his shoes were in the rickshaw, and when he stepped out of his three-wheeler to wait for a new customer, he inadvertently stepped on some pieces of paper on the roadside,” Imran said. “Dennis didn’t [know] that the pages were Islamic scripture.”

Muslims who observed the scene reportedly assaulted Albert, despite his purported attempts to explain that the situation was a misunderstanding.

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Asad Jamal, Albert's attorney, called the charges against his client "ridiculous, to say the least."

"There's nothing that proves that Dennis has committed the act intentionally," Jamal said. "It seems that some individuals and groups have launched a campaign to target innocent people with blasphemy charges."

As for Albert's mindset, Imran said his brother is "losing hope for his freedom" as the case drags on.

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Rick Warren Slams Robert Morris on Sexual Abuse

The fallout continues after Robert Morris resigned from Gateway Church over furor following allegations he molested a 12-year-old girl in the 1980s.

Prominent Christian author and retired pastor Rick Warren isn't mincing words in his condemnation of the reports about Morris. Warren posted to X saying, "I'm angry & disgusted to hear of Robert Morris' sexual abuse of a child & heartbroken for Cindy Clemishire. To sexually use a 12 yr old child, then continue it for yrs, is not merely an 'inappropriate relationship.' It's a crime. Sexual child abuse is an evil punishable by law. One can't just confess when caught & move on with no consequences."

I'm angry & disgusted to hear of Robert Morris' sexual abuse of a child & heartbroken for Cindy Clemishire. To sexually use a 12 yr old child, then continue it for yrs, is not merely an "inappropriate relationship." It's a crime. Sexual child abuse is an evil punishable by law....

– Rick Warren (@RickWarren) June 21, 2024

Daystar Television Network announced this week that it had removed all of Morris' programming from its network, with Gateway Church elders separately launching an investigation into the claims against their former leader.

"We are deeply grieved and saddened by the recent and very serious allegations against Pastor Robert Morris involving the sexual abuse of a 12-year-old minor," Daystar said in a statement. "In light of these events and a recently released statement by Gateway's Elders, Daystar's leadership has made the decision to remove all of Pastor Robert Morris' programming from our broadcasting schedule."

A Statement from Daystar Television Network ☐☐

– Daystar Television (@Daystar) June 19, 2024

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Recapping What Unfolded

As CBN News previously reported, Morris, 62, who resigned from Gateway Tuesday, June 18, offered an initial statement on the allegations against him in which he again used the term “young lady.”

In that statement to The Christian Post, Morris described what he said was “inappropriate sexual behavior with a young lady” in a home he stayed in during his 20s. “It was kissing and petting and not intercourse, but it was wrong,” he said.

The preacher went on to state that the behavior happened on “several occasions” over a number of years. Morris said the situation was “brought to light” in 1987. He said he confessed, repented, sought counseling and returned to ministry two years later with the support of the victim’s father.

For the record, the accuser, Cindy Clemishire—now 54—has denied the latter claim.

“I submitted myself to the Elders of Shady Grove Church and the young lady’s father,” Morris said. “They asked me to step out of ministry and receive counseling and freedom ministry, which I did. Since that time, I have walked in purity and accountability in this area.”

This statement ignited a further firestorm after Clemishire and others pushed back on the language used and as additional details about the allegations against Morris were revealed.

Elders at Gateway initially issued a statement addressing the claims made against Morris, pointedly referring to the preacher’s “moral failure.”

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"Pastor Robert has been open and forthright about a moral failure he had over 35 years ago when he was in his twenties and prior to him starting Gateway Church," the elders' first statement read. "He has shared publicly from the pulpit the proper Biblical steps he took in his lengthy restoration process."

The elders said the matter had been disclosed to church leaders.

However, after Morris resigned, the church said in a second statement that it did not previously know the scope or details of the allegations against the preacher.

"The elders' prior understanding was that Morris's extramarital relationship, which he had discussed many times throughout his ministry, was with 'a young lady' and not [the] abuse of a 12-year-old child," it read. "We are heartbroken and appalled by what has come to light over the past few days, and we express our deep sympathy to the victim and her family."

Clemishire has again disputed these claims, stating that she emailed Robert Morris' Gateway email address in 2005 and delivered details about the alleged crimes.

"Former Gateway elder, Tom Lane, received and responded to my email, acknowledging that the sexual abuse began on December 25, 1982, when I was 12 years old," she said in a statement through attorney Boz Tchividjian, grandson of the late evangelist Billy Graham.

Clemishire continued, "Again in 2007, my then attorney Gentner Drummond (the current Attorney General of Oklahoma) sent a letter to Robert Morris with the hope that he would help reimburse me for the thousands of dollars I had expended in

counseling as a result of this abuse. His attorney acknowledged the dates as well and then attempted to blame me for the abuse.”

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Gunmen Attack Churches, Synagogue and Police Post, 15 Dead

MOSCOW (AP) – More than 15 police officers and several civilians, including an Orthodox priest, were killed by armed militants in Russia’s southern republic of Dagestan on Sunday, its governor Sergei Melikov said in a video statement early Monday.

The gunmen opened fire on two Orthodox churches, a synagogue and a police post in two cities, according to the authorities.

Russia’s National Anti-Terrorist Committee described the attacks in the predominantly Muslim region with a history of armed insurgency as terrorist acts.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday were declared days of mourning in the region.

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Dagestan's Interior Ministry said a group of armed men shot at a synagogue and a church in the city of Derbent, located on the Caspian Sea. Both the church and the synagogue caught fire, according to state media. Almost simultaneously, reports appeared about an attack on a church and a traffic police post in the Dagestan capital, Makhachkala.

Authorities announced a counter-terrorist operation in the region. The Anti-Terrorist Committee said five gunmen were "eliminated." The governor said six "bandits" had been "liquidated." The conflicting numbers couldn't be immediately reconciled and it wasn't clear how many militants were involved in the attacks.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks. The authorities launched a criminal investigation on the charge of a terrorist act.

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Russian state news agency Tass cited law enforcement sources as saying that a Dagestani official was detained over his sons' involvement in the attacks.

Melikov said in the video statement that the situation in the region was under control of the law enforcement and local authorities, and vowed that the investigation of the attacks will continue until "all the sleeping cells" of the militants are uncovered.

He claimed, without providing evidence, that the attacks might have been prepared from abroad, and referenced what the Kremlin calls "the special military operation" in Ukraine in an apparent attempt to link the attacks to it.

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Louisiana Schools to Display 10 Commandments Under New Law

Louisiana has become the first state to require the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom.

Republican Governor Jeff Landry signed HB71 into law on Wednesday, June 19, after it passed in the Louisiana Senate in a 30-8 vote and then passed in the state House by a 79-16 vote last month.

The American Civil Liberties Union vows to challenge the law, and the case could go to the U.S. Supreme Court.

If the law survives legal challenges, every Louisiana classroom which receives state funding, from kindergarten to the university level, will be required to display the commandments “on a poster or framed document that is at least 11 inches by 14 inches.” The commandments displays would be paid for by private donations so the state isn’t funding them.

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Louisiana State Rep. Dodie Horton (R) introduced the bill and

said implementing the Ten Commandments is the “basis of all laws in Louisiana” and honors the country’s religious origins, according to The New Orleans Advocate.

“I hope and I pray that Louisiana is the first state to allow moral code to be placed back in the classrooms,” she said. “Since I was in kindergarten (at a private school), it was always on the wall. I learned there was a God, and I knew to honor him and his laws.”

All the “no” votes to the bill came from Democrats. “I didn’t have to learn the Ten Commandments in school. We went to Sunday school,” said Sen. Royce Duplessis (D-New Orleans) who identifies as a practicing Catholic. “You want your kids to learn about the Ten Commandments, take them to church.”

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Duplessis also doesn’t want to deal with the legal challenges. “We’re going to spend valuable state resources defending the law when we really need to be teaching our kids how to read and write,” he said. “I don’t think this is appropriate for us to mandate.”

The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Louisiana, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Freedom from Religion Foundation and the Southern Poverty Law Center have released a statement calling the mandate unconstitutional. “Our public schools are not Sunday schools,” it reads, “and students of all faiths—or no faith—should feel welcome in them.”

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Hezbollah Chief Warns of Unrestricted War if Israel Attacks

JERUSALEM, Israel—If Israel gets into a major war with Hezbollah, the terrorist group threatens to fight without rules and without a ceiling; and a spat between the Biden administration and Israel over the U.S. withholding weapons may be over.

Diplomatic efforts by an American envoy sent to head off an all-out war between Hezbollah and Israel don't appear to be succeeding.

Now, both Hezbollah and the Israel Defense Forces are ramping up their threats against each other.

Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah claims his terrorist army—what he calls “the resistance—will go all-out and fight dirty if Israel attacks.

“If the war is imposed on Lebanon, the resistance will fight without control, without rules and without a ceiling,” he warned.

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Nasrallah also threatened to drag Cyprus into the war if that island nation allows Israel's military or civilian jets to use

its runways.

Whatever the threats, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant insists one way or another, the Jewish nation is going to put an end to the near-daily Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel.

Gallant asserted, "We have an obligation to change the situation in the north and return the citizens safely to their homes and we will find a way to do this."

Meanwhile, as Hezbollah's shelling of northern Israel increases, citizens still in their homes react with fear and weariness.

"It's scary because you don't know when it is coming to you. Suddenly you have an alarm, suddenly missiles fall," said Uri Vazana.

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Another local resident, Shishi Phima, stated, "It is unbearable. It can't be contained. It is impossible to live with it."

Many among the roughly 80,000 Israelis displaced by all the shelling have been hoping they could return by Sept. 1, when school starts again.

"I want to say that everything will be alright and the people are going to come back to here and the north is going to live again," said Kiryat Shmona resident Yarden Haziza.

However, Israel's Chief Military Spokesman Daniel Hagari believes it's not right to promise evacuees they can be back by the beginning of September. "It is wrong to grasp on a date which we then later will not be able to stand by," he cautioned.

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