

CNN Announces Debate Lineup, Rand Paul Makes Main Stage

Sunday morning, *CNN* announced the lineups for the two televised Republican presidential candidate debates. Despite concerns he would be left out of the main debate, the network announced U.S. Sen. Rand Paul would join the eight other leading candidates.

CNN said it considered national and state surveys conducted by *ABC News*, *Bloomberg News*, *CBS News*, *CNN*, *Fox News*, Gallup, Marist University, McClatchy News Service, Monmouth News Service, *NBC News*, *The New York Times*, Pew Research Center, Quinnipiac University, *TIME*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Des Moines Register*, the University of New Hampshire, WBUR and WMUR.

Donald Trump, who continues to lead in two of the first three early-voting states, as well as in national polls, will take center stage in the 8:30 p.m. EST “main debate.” To his left will be U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Paul. To his right will be Dr. Ben Carson, U.S. Marco Rubio, Carly Fiorina, and Ohio Gov. John Kasich.

Paul publicly announced his campaign had lobbied *CNN* and the Republican National Committee prior to Sunday’s announcement. In a statement released Saturday, the campaign said that it had asked for the same consideration that had previously been given to Fiorina in August.

“Our campaign asserts that fairness in dealing with polling variances, which previously allowed for amended rules for Carly Fiorina for *CNN*’s August Republican Presidential debate, would indicate Rand Paul should be on the main stage during Tuesday’s debate,” the statement said.

It is unclear if the lobbying had any impact on the decision to include Paul with the other leading candidates. *CNN* nor the RNC have made any mention of the Paul campaign's lobbying effort. *CNN*, however, said a *FOX News* poll released Sunday morning showed Paul had "viability in Iowa," which led to his inclusion.

Four candidates will take part in a "first debate" at 6 p.m. EST. They are: former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and former New York Gov. George Pataki.

Both debates will be moderated by Wolf Blitzer. He will be joined by *CNN*'s Chief Political Correspondent Dana Bash and nationally syndicated talk radio host Hugh Hewitt.