

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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