

It Begins: Rand Paul Is Taking No Prisoners

Rand Paul will be absent from Thursday night's debates on FOX Business Network, and he hasn't been shy about the reason why. In an interview with CNN Thursday morning, he laid out his complaint:

"I think the Republican Party and media are making a big mistake by pushing me out of the debate because I think I have a different voice, a unique voice in the party, and I think it's a mistake not to have me in. And I think actually we meet the criteria."

Paul points to the most recent Iowa Poll conducted by *The Des Moines Register*, which shows him in fifth place in the first-in-the-nation caucus state, polling at 5 percent. When CNN *New Day* host Alysia Camerota pointed out the poll wasn't released during the time period required by FOX and the Republican National Committee, he called that fact a "technicality":

"That sounds like a technicality when we're talking about the national campaign. We've raised \$25 million, been doing this for two years. We have a thousand precinct chairs in Iowa. People have to realize that what the media is doing here is pre-deciding an election or trying to pre-decide an election. I have an important voice. What do you think the liberty voters are thinking now? That the Republican Party in league with one of the media networks is saying we're not going let the liberty candidate on the stage."

Paul was asked why he would forgo an audience of millions when he can only reach hundreds at a time on the campaign trail. He said it was about sending a message:

"I think people in the media misunderstand this. It isn't

about viewership. It is about being designated as part of people who aren't going to win. There is only one debate. Let's be honest about this. There is only one debate and the thing is, there is no equivalent. Would you take a spot at 3:00 a.m. versus your 9:00 a.m. or 7:00 a.m.? They aren't the same and we are kidding ourselves and we don't even describe them as the same. So what it is, is about predefining the race. We have not had one vote yet and everybody is going crazy like Donald Trump has won the race already. And I think it's a mistake and it disenfranchises the voters of Iowa or New Hampshire. Not one vote has been cast and we're already deciding who can participate? Big mistake ...

"You don't understand that if you are designated as someone who is not in contention, that is very disruptive to a campaign three weeks out. We don't consider that we have a second tier campaign. And we're not going to announce to the American people that we are no longer in contention. Because we absolutely are in contention. We have raised \$25 million. We have announced more precinct chairs in Iowa than any other candidate has so far. We have a first tier campaign and we can't accept an artificial designation by the media and by the party and it is really showing does the party want to be bigger. Does the party want the liberty movement in the Republican Party? Do they want voices saying intervention in the Middle East has made us less safe and not more safe? There is not a lot of difference at all in the polling between Bush, Kasich, all of these in third and fourth and fifth currently, there is not one bit of mathematical distinction. So if you tell me, 'Oh, you are scoring 5.8 and somebody scored 6.2; therefore, we're going to tell the American people you are in a second class or underclass,' that is completely utterly artificial and unfair."

Asked if pulling out of the debate would appear to be sour grapes, Paul said it is a "mistake to let the media or the party pre-decide who has a chance and who doesn't have a

chance.” He said he would instead take his message “directly to the American people.”