The student members of EKU’s first e-CACTUS (hybrid on-line Citizens’ Assembly for Critical Thinking about the United States; www.cactus.eku.edu) have studied, read public comments, and deliberated for the past eight weeks, considering whether to recommend continuation of the current arrangement for providing presidential debates or offer an alternative plan. In their final on-campus meeting, all members present voted in favor of the following proposal. Please cast your vote in support of or in opposition to their proposal on the ballot at the end.

The Assembly recommends that Congress pass a law incorporating the following provisions:

1. Creation of a new, independent seven-member Federal commission to organize and administer presidential debates in a non-partisan manner. No more than three of the members may be from each of the two largest political parties participating in national elections and at least one member shall have no party affiliation or loyalty.
2. The Commission shall conduct debates that will engage candidates in detailed discussion of issues of importance to the nation and educate the public concerning such issues and shall have flexibility to resolve issues of detail in the spirit of this mandate.
3. The Commission and its activities shall be funded through a combination of public revenue and private or corporate contributions. Recognition of the latter shall be limited to being named in the official reports of the Commission.
4. The Commission shall adopt rules of eligibility that will realistically allow participation in the debates by candidates other than the candidates of the two major political parties, including candidates with new and important ideas to contribute and toward whom a significant percentage of the public have demonstrated interest and/or support.
5. The Commission shall be directed to conduct from two to five debates in each general election cycle, taking into consideration such issues as the number of candidates eligible to participate, the topics that need to be considered, and the appropriate formats for organizing the debates.
6. Topics for discussion will be arranged to cover a range of prominent or important public issues.
7. Some questions asked of the candidates will be prepared or solicited by the Commission in advance but withheld from the candidates until the debates.
8. Debate moderators must have demonstrated political knowledge, ability to facilitate a political debate so as to avoid favoritism in the treatment of candidates, maintain order, and ensure that candidates speak directly to the topics selected for discussion.
9. Debates will be organized in varied formats allowing multiple avenues of questioning and discussion that may include questions directed from the public, from debate audiences, a panel of journalists or other informed analysts of public affairs, or a moderator presenting previously prepared questions to the candidates.
10. A significant portion of time in the debates shall be allowed for the candidates to address and question each other with reasonable time limits for answers.
11. Candidates appearing in debates must provide a statement of their positions on issues of importance to be posted on the Internet to inform and educate the public prior to the debates.
12. The Commission shall operate in accordance with the spirit of this law, and without regard to the preferences or interests of political parties, candidates, campaign organizations, using its own independent assessment of the most appropriate and effective plans, schedules, and procedures for the debate process.

Major reasons for recommending this new law include a consensus that:

- debates should include more and better information and education for the public, and more depth of discussion;
- some third parties and/or viable independent candidates should be included;
- these outcomes are lacking because the current privately organized and funded Commission on Presidential Debates has put the interests of the Democratic and Republican parties ahead of those of the voting public, and allowed them to control and restrict the content of the debates. These will be explained in more detail in the Assembly’s forthcoming Final Report.

1. **VOTE HERE:**

| I SUPPORT the CACTUS recommendation to create an independent government commission to conduct presidential debates. | 167 | 85% |
I OPPOSE the CACTUS recommendation and prefer to maintain the current privately organized and funded Commission on Presidential Debates.

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Please click Submit to cast your vote.