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USA Today
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CC: Commission on Presidential Debates

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Dear Susan,

Congratulations on your selection by the Commission on Presidential Debates to moderate the upcoming Vice Presidential debate. In your role as moderator, we hope you will ensure the candidates for Vice President address the issues Americans care about.

In that light, we the 13 undersigned organizations implore you to address LGBTQ issues at the upcoming debate. With over 11 million LGBTQ adults able to vote in the upcoming election, and [57 million Equality Voters](#) who prioritize LGBTQ issues at the ballot box, it will do our nation and community a disservice to exclude these issues as a part of the conversation.

Our community is in crisis. COVID-19 has [disproportionately impacted](#) both our health and our pocketbooks, even more so for LGBTQ people living with intersectional identities. In the midst of this pandemic, [President Trump and Vice President Pence put forward a rule](#) limiting LGBTQ people's access to health care by eliminating LGBTQ non-discrimination protections from the Affordable Care Act. While we paused those efforts [through a federal court injunction](#), Trump and Pence's efforts to eliminate the ACA entirely are soon to be heard by the Supreme Court, whose possible decision to eliminate the law would disproportionately impact marginalized people, particularly people living with HIV. Hate-fueled violence is on the rise, and so far this year [30 transgender and gender non-conforming people have been killed](#), putting us on track for the deadliest year on record for the transgender community. A majority of those lost are Black and Latinx transgender women who live at the intersection of racism, misogyny, and transphobia - all of which have been fomented and exacerbated by Trump, Pence, and their allies. LGBTQ children are dealing with higher instances of bullying in schools, all while [Secretary DeVos offers fewer methods of recourse](#) against those bullies.

Last year, the House passed the Equality Act - crucial federal legislation that would finally guarantee explicit protections for LGBTQ people under our nation's existing civil rights laws - a bill that [Sen. Harris has championed, but Vice President Pence opposes](#). Not only has the Trump-Pence Administration threatened to veto the Equality Act, they also urged the Supreme Court to reject non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people. While the Supreme Court affirmed workplace discrimination protections for LGBTQ people in *Bostock* earlier this year,

Trump and Pence are dragging their heels on implementing these protections. And they continue to ban qualified transgender people from serving openly in our armed forces.

The 11 million LGBTQ people, and 57 million Equality Voters need to hear the candidates address these critical issues and their vision for our future.

Vice President Mike Pence and Sen. Kamala Harris have deeply divergent records on equality that should be highlighted for Americans. As Governor of Indiana, [Pence led the charge](#) to weaken LGBTQ protections and demonize and dehumanize our community. Sen. Harris, on the other hand, was among the first politicians to marry LGBTQ couples and has acted as one of the community's most strident advocates in the Senate. 57 million Equality Voters across the country, especially the 10.2 million in key states like Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin, deserve to hear more about the two candidates' records.

According to Media Matters for America, moderators of the eleven Democratic primary debates asked candidates 1,208 questions -- yet only three were about LGBTQ issues or through an LGBTQ lens asked by Chuck Todd and Yamiche Alcindor.

In 2016, presidential and vice-presidential debate moderators [did not ask](#) candidates a single question about LGBTQ issues across four debates. You have the opportunity to change that and address the issues our community faces in this trying time.

Sincerely,

Human Rights Campaign

Center for American Progress Action

Equality Federation

LGBTQ Victory Fund

Media Matters Action Network

National Black Justice Coalition

National Center for Transgender Equality Action Fund

National Equality Action Team (NEAT)

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

Equality California

Equality Florida

Equality North Carolina

Silver State Equality