

INDIVISIBLE DEBATE WATCH GUIDE

WINNING WITH OUR VALUES



WE CAN WIN IN 2020

Before we dive into the details of the crowded 2020 field, and what issues we think are most important to keep in mind as we evaluate that field, we wanted to be explicit: we can win in 2020.

The 2016 election cycle was difficult and damaging in many ways, but one of the most lasting challenges is that it left so many of us scared. In 2018, we elected the most diverse Congress in our country's history, made up of members who've sponsored bills like the Green New Deal and the sweeping democracy reforms in HR 1. But, as we look ahead to 2020, so many of us are still hung up on "electability." Too often, we're being guided by our fears, not our hopes, about the future of our country.

As we head into 2020, we have a historically strong and diverse Democratic field. We have candidates who are unafraid to take bold positions on unrigging our democracy, creating a people-first immigration policy, and leaning into ambitious plans to address climate change. And we have candidates from a wide range of backgrounds: current US Senators, mayors of large and small cities, and two former members of the Obama administration. For the first time in our country's history, we have a field that includes Latino, Black, white and AAPI candidates; gay and straight candidates; and working class candidates who are rejecting corporate PAC money.

We know the stakes are high. But we think concerns about "electability" are a self-fulfilling prophecy. So we're focused on engaging with 2020 candidates on their own merits: finding candidates who have a good plan on the issues that matter to us, and are able to tell a compelling story about their candidacy and motivate the broad multiracial coalition we need to build to win in 2020.

June & July Debates

Over the two nights of the June and July Democratic debates, we'll hear from 20 candidates. All of these candidates either received donations from at least 65,000 unique donors or polled above 1 percent in three separate polls—and many hit both benchmarks. This debate watch guide is intended to help you evaluate the debates, and answer two questions:

- Who are the 20 Democratic candidates for President participating in the debates?
- How can we evaluate their debate performance?

The first section of this guide will give background on the first question: who the candidates participating in the debate are. The second section will dive into the issues we think will drive the 2020 campaign, and provide prompts and places for you to take notes as you watch the debates. Fill it out alone, with your group, or with neighbors, and follow along us on Twitter at @IndivisibleTeam.

Who's Running: 2020 Candidates Participating in the June Democratic Debate

To date, there are 24 Democrats running for President. Only 20 will be on the debate stage at the end of the month (although which 20 qualify could be different for the June & July debates). Congressman Seth Moulton, from Massachusetts 6th Congressional District; Mayor Wayne Messam from Miramar, Florida; former Alaska Senator Mike Gravel; and Montana Governor Steve Bullock failed to meet the criteria set out by the DNC to qualify for the June debate. Governor Bullock's exclusion is perhaps most disappointing. The Governor made getting money out of politics and pushing back on the Citizens United Supreme Court decision hallmarks of his tenure. With Bullock off the stage, we'll be looking to other candidates to hammer the theme of corruption, and reducing the impact of corporate dollars on our policies.

How to Use this Guide

If you're hosting a debate watch party, print one or two copies of the Candidates section for the whole party. This section is a reference, if you find yourself wondering who some of the candidates on the stage are.

Print individual copies of the workbook section for everyone at your party to fill out. Print double-sided if you can!

NIGHT ONE

Wednesday, June 26

9 p.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern time



Cory Booker



Julián Castro



Jay Inslee



Amy Klobuchar



Beto O'Rourke



Elizabeth Warren



Bill de Blasio



John Delaney



Tulsi Gabbard



Tim Ryan

NIGHT TWO

Thursday, June 27

9 p.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern time



Joe Biden



Pete Buttigieg



Kamala Harris



Kirsten Gillibrand



Bernie Sanders



Michael Bennet



John
Hickenlooper



Eric Swalwell



Marianne
Williamson



Andrew Yang

WHO WE'VE BEEN WATCHING



**Vice President
Joe Biden**

Who They Are: Joe Biden served as Vice President under President Obama, and previously served as a Senator from Delaware for over three decades.

How They're Polling: Biden has consistently led the pack in polling—although he and Senator Sanders are the only candidates running who've run national campaigns before, so it's worth keeping in mind that they start off with much higher name recognition.

What We're Watching For: Biden comes into these debates as one of the presumed frontrunners for the Democratic nomination, but to date he has largely avoided issue forums where he could be pressed on tough issues. Listen for Biden to address his support for the Hyde Amendment and the 1994 crime bill—two big sticking points for progressives.



**New Jersey Senator
Cory Booker**

Who They Are: Cory Booker is the junior Senator from New Jersey, and former Mayor of Newark.

How They're Polling: Senator Booker breaks the 1 percent threshold in almost every national poll, putting him comfortably in the top 10. He'll be looking to make the debates a breakout moment for his campaign.

What We're Watching For: Senator Booker has put out some of the strongest plans on addressing the roots of racial injustice, from his [baby bonds](#) plan to his housing plan. Look for him to amplify these issues in the debate—and listen to how other candidates respond.



**South Bend Mayor
Pete Buttigieg**

Who They Are: Pete Buttigieg (pronounced Boot-EDGE-EDGE) is the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and a former intelligence officer in the Navy Reserve.

How They're Polling: Buttigieg made a splash with his first CNN town hall in early March, and has since gone from polling at about 1 percent to consistently being one of the top five candidates.

What We're Watching For: "Mayor Pete" had a breakout moment with his March town hall, but has sometimes hewed to more moderate policy positions instead of supporting real progressive priorities. We'll be looking to see whether the Mayor is willing to take bold policy stances, or tacks to the middle in the debates.



**Former Housing and
Urban Development
Secretary
Julián Castro**

Who They Are: Julián Castro served as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Obama, and previously served as Mayor of San Antonio, TX.

How They're Polling: Secretary Castro typically breaks the 1 percent threshold in polls, putting him comfortably in the top half of candidates on the debate stage. However, less than half of voters say they've heard of Castro, so he'll be looking to the debates to raise his profile.

What We're Watching For: Julián Castro was the first candidate to put out a progressive plan on immigration that goes beyond a plan for "comprehensive immigration reform," which would give more money to ICE and CBP, and actually puts people first. Look for Castro to lead on immigration questions—and for other candidates to support his vision on the issue.

WHO WE'VE BEEN WATCHING



**New York Senator
Kirsten Gillibrand**

Who They Are: Kirsten Gillibrand has been the junior Senator from New York since 2008.

How They're Polling: Gillibrand only sometimes breaks the 1 percent threshold in polling. She has built a high profile as a leading opponent to Trump in the Senate, and she'll be looking to translate that into a breakout debate moment.

What We're Watching For: Senator Gillibrand has a strong record on protecting abortion rights—watch for her to use her proven track record on the issue to her advantage on the debate stage.



**California Senator
Kamala Harris**

Who They Are: Kamala Harris is the junior Senator from California, where she previously served as Attorney General.

How They're Polling: Senator Harris has consistently polled in the top five candidates, and she often shows up as a second choice candidate in polls, so she may have room to grow if other candidates stumble.

What We're Watching For: Harris has some of the most direct experience with the criminal justice system of any candidates running for President. Her past experience as a prosecutor means she can have a mixed track record on the issue, but it also means she's putting out strong proposals to end mass incarceration and cash bail that are grounded in her experiences. Watch for her to address issues of criminal justice reform.



**Washington
Governor Jay Inslee**

Who They Are: Jay Inslee is the Governor of Washington, and a former US Representative for Washington.

How They're Polling: Inslee only sometimes breaks the 1 percent threshold in polling.

What We're Watching For: Governor Inslee has centered his campaign around climate change. He has ambitious plans to combat the damage of the climate crisis, and is fighting to put the issue front and center in the 2020 campaign. Watch for him to challenge the other candidates for their plans on the issue, and elevate climate in the first debate.



**Minnesota Senator
Amy Klobuchar**

Who They Are: Amy Klobuchar is the senior Senator from Minnesota, and former County Attorney for Hennepin County.

How They're Polling: Klobuchar almost always clears the 1 percent threshold in national polls, putting her comfortably in the top 10.

What We're Watching For: Senator Klobuchar has pitched her campaign as an effort to win back the states that Obama won in 2012, but that Clinton lost in 2016. Competing in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania will be key to winning in 2020, but watch to make sure that Senator Klobuchar doesn't conflate winning in the Midwest with pushing a race-blind economic populist message that leaves voters of color out of the conversation.

WHO WE'VE BEEN WATCHING



**Former Texas Representative
Beto O'Rourke**

Who They Are: Beto O'Rourke represented El Paso in the House of Representative until 2018, when he narrowly lost election in a Senate race against incumbent Senator Ted Cruz.

How They're Polling: Earlier in the race O'Rourke was consistently polling in the top five candidates, but has dropped slightly as other candidates (notably Mayor Pete) have gained support.

What We're Watching For: O'Rourke is one of the few candidates to put out a full plan on comprehensive, structural democracy reform. We think the plan could go further (we'd love to hear more on filibuster reform!)—but we're glad to see 2020ers prioritizing the issue.



**Vermont Senator
Bernie Sanders**

Who They Are: Bernie Sanders is the junior Senator from Vermont, and ran a hard-fought campaign for the Democratic nomination for president in 2016.

How They're Polling: Sanders has been polling in second place consistently, having built a strong base of support during his 2016 campaign.

What We're Watching For: Unlike in his insurgent 2016 campaign, Sanders enters the 2020 race as a frontrunner—and this time around, many of his signature proposals (from Medicare for All to a peace-focused foreign policy) have already been embraced by the other candidates. Watch to see how Sanders works to stand out on a debate stage where he is no longer alone on the left flank.



**Massachusetts Senator
Elizabeth Warren**

Who They Are: Elizabeth Warren is the senior Senator from Massachusetts, and was a driving force behind the founding of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).

How They're Polling: Warren has typically been polling in the top five, and has moved into third place in more recent polls.

What We're Watching For: Warren has been shining at candidate forums, where activists have taken up her cry of "I've got a plan for that!" Look for Warren to stand out on specifics—when other candidates veer into platitudes, expect her to detail what she plans to do and how she plans to do it.

WHO MIGHT SURPRISE US

Polls show that less than half of voters have an opinion (positive or negative) about these candidates. They only sometimes clear the 1 percent polling threshold, and they're far from a household name, so they'll be looking for breakout moments in the debates.



**Colorado Senator
Michael Bennet**

Who They Are: Michael Bennet is the senior Senator from Colorado, and former Superintendent of Denver Public Schools.

What We're Watching For: Senator Bennet recently wrote a book about systemic problems with our democracy (we don't disagree!), but continues to oppose ending the filibuster. Watch for him to explain how we'll pass major legislation to fix our democracy, if Democrats fall short of 60 votes in the Senate.



**New York Mayor
Bill de Blasio**

Who They Are: Bill de Blasio is the current Mayor, and former Public Advocate, of New York.

What We're Watching For: Watch for de Blasio to make the case for why he got in the race. Unlike a lot of other candidates, de Blasio doesn't have a clear constituency or single issue he's running to elevate. What issues will he hit hardest on the debate stage?



**Former Maryland
Representative
John Delaney**

Who They Are: John Delaney is a former US Representative from Maryland.

What We're Watching For: Delaney has been in the race for longer than most candidates—he started running in 2017. Most recently, he attracted attention for his strong opposition to Medicare for All, putting him outside the norm of Democrats running this year. Watch to see how he addresses his plans for solving the health care crisis.



**Hawaii
Representative
Tulsi Gabbard**

Who They Are: Tulsi Gabbard is the current representative for Hawaii's 2nd Congressional district.

What We're Watching For: Watch for how Gabbard handles questions on foreign policy. While Gabbard is a veteran, she's also come under fire for her support for the Assad regime in Syria. See how she answers questions about support for democratic movements abroad, or accountability for war crimes.

WHO MIGHT SURPRISE US



**Former Colorado Governor
John Hickenlooper**

Who They Are: John Hickenlooper was the governor of Colorado from 2011 through 2019. Previously, he served as the Mayor of Denver.

What We're Watching For: Governor Hickenlooper is framing a large portion of his campaign around his plan to elevate and invest in rural communities. We don't necessarily disagree with this choice, morally or tactically—it's certainly true that rural parts of the country are struggling, especially when it comes to issues like health care access, and rural counties were an [often-overlooked part of Democrats 2018 wins](#). But "rural" can sometimes be code for "white"—watch to make sure Hickenlooper isn't just prioritizing white working class voters.



**Ohio Representative
Tim Ryan**

Who They Are: Tim Ryan is the representative for Ohio's 13th Congressional district.

What We're Watching For: Tim Ryan is running as a moderate focused on the country's "forgotten communities." We're concerned about whose issues he chooses to prioritize (don't expect him to make addressing the racial wealth gap a centerpiece of his campaign), and about his past record. While Ryan's gotten better on both issues, he entered Congress as a pro-life Democrat with an A rating from the NRA. He also launched an unsuccessful bid to unseat Nancy Pelosi as the House Democratic leader in 2016.



**California Representative
Eric Swalwell**

Who They Are: Eric Swalwell is the representative for California's 15th Congressional district.

What We're Watching For: Swalwell is one of the younger candidates running, at 39. He's also made gun violence prevention a central part of his campaign. Watch for him to push others on issues that matter to younger voters—especially including specific plans to take on the NRA and address gun violence.



**Tech Entrepreneur
Andrew Yang**

Who They Are: Andrew Yang is a tech entrepreneur and the founder of Venture for America.

What We're Watching For: Yang's big idea is establishing universal basic income, which has gotten him a lot of attention from some progressives. That said, it's less clear he has the policy expertise on a range of other issues, especially around issues related to the role of systemic racism in the country. Look for him to push the rest of the field to the left on economic policy, but watch to see how he answers questions about how to address historic inequities.

WHO MIGHT SURPRISE US



**Motivational
Speaker
Marianne
Williamson**

Who They Are: Marianne Williamson is a motivational speaker and author.

What We're Watching For: Williamson has made addressing systemic racism a central piece of her campaign, and was an early and vocal supporter of reparations for the descendants of slaves. Watch for her to push the field on addressing anti-Black racism and looking for institutional solutions.

EVALUATING DEBATE PERFORMANCE

There will be twenty candidates on stage over the course of two nights for the first two Presidential primary debates in June and July. For many people, this will be the first time they're tuning into the primary. And because of the rules laid out by the DNC, candidates will only appear on stage together at official debates—meaning this is the first time these candidates will be going head to head.

We want to nominate the best possible candidate to beat President Trump in November 2020: a candidate who can motivate a multiracial coalition of voters, excite core Democratic voters, and push back against dangerous and divisive rhetoric on the right.

We believe the best way to pick a candidate who can win is to figure out which candidates are speaking directly to our values, and putting out bold policy platforms on the issues we care about. This isn't just a values-driven strategy—it's also strategic. The Democratic nominee will need to motivate a multiracial coalition of voters across huge swaths of American geography. Candidates who are able to articulate a real vision and plan on the issues we care about will be best positioned to motivate that coalition, and win in November.

In evaluating Democratic performance in the debates, we'll be looking at how candidates respond to questions on the core issues we think will drive the 2020 campaign: Democracy Reform, Immigration, Abortion, Climate, Health Care, Peace & Foreign Policy, and Racial Justice.

These worksheets are created to help you evaluate how you think candidates are performing on those issues. Under each subject, you're going to find talking points about what we consider really good answers on the issue, versus answers that need work. As you're hearing the candidates talk, take notes on which answers you find engaging and which disappoint you. We also know that these aren't the only important issues—and certainly aren't necessarily the issues that are most important to you or your group. So we've also left space to take notes on other issues that are most important to you.

Taken together, these worksheets are intended to give you a space to evaluate candidate performance during the debate, and start separating out the candidates who make you most excited to participate in the Democratic primary process next year. We recommend printing two sets of these worksheets: one for the June debates, and one for the debates in July. They'll be helpful to look back on, and see how your views on the candidates have (or haven't!) evolved over time.

What About Electability?

One thing we've been hearing a lot in media narratives around 2020 is that Democrats care most about finding a candidate who's "electable." A lot of the time, that's code for older, white, and male.

Honestly? We don't buy it. No one was considered less electable than Donald Trump in 2015. There's no paint-by-numbers code to crack to find the perfect candidate to beat Trump next year. The most strategic thing we can do is nominate a candidate who's able to genuinely excite a broad multiracial coalition of voters—and the way to do that is to find the candidates who are speaking to the issues we think will drive the next election cycle. This isn't just based on our opinions: we saw this strategy work in 2018, when grassroots engagement wound up retaking the House and—at the same time—electing the most diverse freshman class in the institution's history.

So don't let pundits tell you who's electable—look at who you find most exciting, and make it happen.

Let us know how you think the debate is going!

Share pictures of your debate watch parties and worksheets on twitter, with #IndivisibleDebate! Be sure to tag @IndivisibleTeam so we can retweet you! During the debate, visit <https://indivisible.soapboxx.us/prompt-single/Halftime> to let us know which candidates you think are giving A+ answers to your questions and which candidates' answers need some work. Also, look out for an email or SMS survey from our team on how you think candidates did in the debates! You can sign up to receive debate texts by texting "DEBATES" to 977-79.

OVERALL

After both nights of debate, which three candidates are you most excited to hear more from?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

After both nights of debate, which three candidates were you most disappointed by?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

After both nights of debate, how would you grade the debate itself?

Moderators

A

B

C

D

F

Questions

A

B

C

D

F

Structure

A

B

C

D

F

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