

The VP debate, blow by interrupting blow

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

October 12, 2012

*[Once again](#), no live-tweeting for me. Just note-taking on the laptop while watching, followed by a little cleanup and link-adding this morning.*

8:02. Raddatz: We're gonna jump around a lot, because politics is chaotic, so seems logical that the media should add to the chaos.

8:03. Ryan goes right for the water glass. Being a Very Serious Person makes a fella thirsty.

8:04. Biden: "We will find and bring to justice" the terrorists. I like this a lot better than in the 2004 debates when John Kerry kept pledging to personally strangle them.

8:05. Biden: Benghazi was bad; Romney's worse. Quite a pivot, Joe—it happened on your guy's watch.

8:05. Biden thinks terrorists are from hell and wants to chase them there. Never mind about the less chest-beating than Kerry thing.

8:06. Ryan: We'll have the courage to say something's terrorism *before* we know whether it's terrorism.

8:08. Biden's first openly dismissive snicker. Can't believe it took eight whole minutes.

8:09. Biden: Paul Ryan's a crazy liar, but also my friend! My crazy liar friend.

8:11. Ryan agrees, forcefully, that America should apologize for service members urinating on corpses. A low-stakes concession--as bipartisan values go, not peeing on dead people is right up there with calling \$249,999 a middle-class salary and pretending the drug war is working. But it helps him get away with dodging the riskier question about Quran-burning.

8:12. Raddatz: Since you pivoted to Iran, let's make it my idea and I'll define the conversation. I think she's already said more words than Jim Lehrer did last week.

8:15. Biden makes a strong point weakly. Maybe he and Obama aren't so different after all.

8:18. Biden: The ayatollah knows that Joe Biden has lots of numbers memorized, and knows Netanyahu personally, and calls Netanyahu "Bibi."

8:21. Biden calls Raddatz a foreign policy expert. This doesn't really take the edge off the fact that he's *lecturing the moderator*.

8:22. Raddatz asks a tough question, and Ryan answers it: he thinks a nuclear Iran would be worse than war.

8:25. Ryan: Janesville's just like Scranton, except that in Janesville we pronounce it "Scran Ton."

8:27. Ryan: Mitt Romney is "a car guy" who once paid for a stranger's education. Yes, I'd say that's roughly equivalent to not having explicitly opposed the auto-industry rescue.

8:31. Ryan: Obama had one-party control! This talking point is [getting annoying](#).

8:32. Biden's point about stimulus dollars for Ryan's district falls flat. It's not hypocritical to participate in a program you think shouldn't exist.

8:33 Correction: Biden's point falls flat until he gets around to the fact that Ryan's letter asking for money *specifically argued that the funds would create jobs*. It is hypocritical to argue that stimulus works only when it's convenient to do so.

8:35. There's a certain contrast between hearing Ryan talk about the Medicare advisory board and hearing Palin do it.

8:35. Another Obama-ism from Ryan: "Here's what we're saying." Of course, he conjugates it differently. New language the GOP should test: "The Democrats think they're SOOO present perfect. But we're the real party of the present. *Progressive*."

8:36. Biden mentions Palin and the death panels. But Ryan is criticizing an actual thing, while Palin was criticizing a fantasy.

8:38. Ryan: You're stealing from the Medicare cookie jar to pay for Obamacare! This would make more sense if Medicare were to Obamacare as cookies are to, say, beer. Actually it's like cookies to *other cookies*.

8:44. Without a plausible plan to run on, challengers keep painting incumbents as not having a record to run on and thus painting challengers as someone people should run from.

8:44. Raddatz should moderate every debate from now on. Give her a federal salary. Make her debate czar.

8:48. Ryan's from Canada? I'm from his district, so I guess that means I'm Canadian, too.

8:48. Ryan: "We have three bottom lines." [Yes, four, four bottom lines.](#)

8:55. Ryan: A smaller navy "invites weakness." This doesn't sound as bad to me as I think it's supposed to.

8:56. Ryan: When I think of Afghanistan, I think of American soldiers. Of course, I'm a politician, so I think of American soldiers when I think of pretty much anything.

8:59. Biden: "It does not depend." Tumblr!!

9:00. I wish they could just say, "we largely agree on foreign policy. So let's either move on to domestic stuff or invite a third-party candidate up here." Instead Ryan fabricates serious distance between them, and Biden gets huffy about disagreeing to disagree.

9:04. Biden returns to the winning strategy of picking on the moderator, who continues to do a great job.

9:06. Now we're arguing about what order the seasons come in. Can we do a quick poll to gauge consensus that the U.S. and Afghanistan are both north of the equator?

9:07. Biden: "Afghans to do the job. Afghans to do the job." Two days to an Autotune sensation.

9:09. Biden: "That they are the facts. They are the facts."

9:10. Ryan: We don't want to send troops to Syria. We want to score points by picking on the U.N. We want to decide *unilaterally* to not send troops to Syria.

9:14. Here we go with the Catholic stuff. How about abortion first, cause why not?

9:15. Raddatz: Please talk personally about this. Ryan: Of course. Let me start by personally preempting what I think he's gonna say when it's his turn.

9:16. Ryan: And to this day, our firstborn child is shaped like a bean.

9:17. Biden refuses to start with abortion, an awkward play but not really his fault. Raddatz's Catholic issues=abortion move is her only real low point so far. Is she going to ask about anything else Catholicish? Does she have time to?

9:19. Ryan on HHS mandate controversy: "Why would they keep suing you?" I can think of a few other reasons, but it's a good line just the same.

9:22. I expected too *much* Catholic stuff. Instead we got a couple minutes about abortion. In protest, I'm going to include analysis of [the crucial Catholic-vote angle](#) for the rest of the debate.

9:22. Biden makes a smooth pivot to the 47 percent. *But what about the crucial Catholic 47 percent?*

9:23. Biden: Big-money political groups are "an abomination." Strong words. *But Catholics are split on Citizens United. Just like the Catholic justices--a crucial swing bloc.*

9:23. Biden realizes partway through yet another "my friend" that it's overkill. *Which candidate do crucial Catholic voters think is their friend?*

9:25. Ryan: What would I say to a soldier who's upset about the tone of politics? Probably lots of numbers, seasoned with some snippets of stump speech. After I thank him for his service. *What if the soldier was Catholic?*

9:28. Raddatz: Ryan didn't have 40 seconds. She's right. *What system do Catholic swing voters use to keep time?*

9:30. Biden hits his closing statement out of the park. But Ryan remembers to thank Biden. *How important is gratitude to the Catholic voter?*

9:31. Setting aside Ryan's ideas as to how to address poverty, I like that he's the rare politician willing to at least say the word publicly. *What percentage of Catholic voters are willing to admit that some people are poor?*