

Viewpoint: Presidential Debate

Publisher's note: We asked our young college student intern to watch the Trump/Biden debate and give us a view of how younger voters view the candidates and the election. His views are shared below.

By BRADLEY MELCHOR
NEWS@THECHEROKEEAN.COM

In the highly anticipated Presidential Debate between current President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, both men took the debate stage for the first time in this election cycle last Thursday night. Hosted by CNN and moderated by Jake Tapper and Dana Bash, the event was held with no live audience, and neither candidate was allowed access to pre-written notes or outside help of any kind.

The first topic of the evening was perhaps the most important to voters: The economy and inflation. The first to speak, President Biden was quick to downplay the current economic struggles within the country and shift the blame onto the previous administration. Trump on the other hand, highlighted the staggering inflation rates, and boasted about having "the greatest economy in the history of the country."

In what became a recurring theme throughout the night, both men played fast and loose with the truth within this topic. While yes, Biden and his administration did inherit a flat-lining economy and have created almost twice as many jobs as the former administration, failure to recognize his shortcomings and elaborate on how he plans to improve the economy will leave most Democrats uninspired.

As for Trump however, while his answers may leave Republican voters more enthusiastic, that does not change the fact that they were not always true, and sometimes misleading. While Trump can certainly be proud of the U.S economy pre-COVID, it certainly was not the greatest this country has ever seen, and his administration's handling of the 2020 pandemic left it in a state of ruin.

By any valuable metric, you can see that both of these candidates have objectively failed to deliver on their promises regarding the economy (based on average GDP growth, Trump and Biden are the two worst performing presidents in the past 50 years, aside from George H.W Bush), and it was extremely disheartening to see both men try to exploit each other's shortcomings rather than offer solutions of their own.

Despite not being asked a question on the topic, the debate then made a quick segue into the topic of COVID-19,

where Trump was quick to criticize the Biden administration and their handling of nationwide mandates and vaccines. While Trump did accurately point out that more Americans died from COVID during Biden's term (roughly 60% of all deaths came under Biden's administration), because Trump was only in power for 10 months of the pandemic, his deaths-per-month ratio is significantly higher than Biden's. This topic was a very short portion of the debate, but a perfect example of how both candidates refuse to acknowledge how poorly they both performed.

The next key issue to be presented to the candidates was that of *Roe V. Wade*. The first to speak on the issue, Trump once again boasted about his role in the decision, and his appointing of Justices Kavanaugh, Gorsuch and Barrett, who helped overturn the ruling. Trump defended his stance on the subject by highlighting the importance of States' rights, while Biden likened the issue to the civil rights movement, and that abortion should be a nationally protected right as well. While you can argue over the morality of the situation, and form your own opinions, the fact of the matter is this segment was once again filled with multiple falsehoods and deflections. While Trump was untruthful in his claims that "everyone" supports the overturning of *Roe* (this is an equally contentious debate between legal scholars as it is politicians) and Biden's support of late-term abortions, Biden sold himself short by deflecting away from the problems caused by *Roe*, and making an empty promise of restoring it.

The debate then took on the issue of immigration, where we once again saw a lot of deception and misdirection from the candidates. Trump was quick to play his favorite card on the subject, stating that the Biden administration is letting in "terrorists and prisoners." However, it is worth noting that the number of illegal immigrants entering the country has exploded since Biden took office, but so has the number of deportations, returns and expulsions. Trump also tried to hint at the negative impact of immigrants on government programs such as Social Security and Medicare. The candidates also took on the topic of foreign policy during the debate, with Trump once again wasting no time in attacking Biden's handling of the situations in Israel and

Ukraine. Trump claimed that he could easily end the dispute between Russia and Ukraine, and strong-arm fellow NATO countries into paying more money than they currently are. While there certainly has been a precedent of Trump dealing well with NATO and Putin, there is an even worse precedent of not taking a European dictator seriously. While in theory Europe being able to protect itself from Putin is an ideal situation, it is not entirely a realistic one. Biden has done well to avoid U.S direct military involvement in both regions, while providing Ukraine and Israel the resources needed to stand against Russia and Hamas. So, while Trump talked a big game in this segment, he once again failed to deliver substantial solutions to the international crises.

The final major topic of the debate we'll be looking at is the candidates' environmental records. Once again, Trump filled this segment with exaggeration and hyperbole, attempting to boast about environmental progress made during his administration. However, the facts simply do not support his claims, as Trump repealed over 20 contamination and pollution regulations and guidelines during his presidency, as well as infamously pulling out of the Paris Accord.

After the more than 90-minute debate and a lot of empty talking, I walked away from this debate feeling even more hopeless than I did going into it, as impossible as that may seem. Despite this being the first time a sitting president has debated a former president, giving both candidates a record to defend, both candidates simply failed to do so. While Trump said a lot of things his supporters wanted to hear, he continued his routine of exaggeration and overpromising. Biden on the other hand, failed to show strength in the debate, and only fed voters' doubts on his sharpness and health. Personally, as a voter, I feel stuck between a rock and a hard place, with neither candidate having an overall positive impact on the country in their first four years, and neither offering substantial ideas and policies to prove they will be better off the second time around.

With the next debate scheduled to be hosted by ABC News on Sept. 10, we can only pray that one of these candidates begins to show more promise.

County merits 'unmodified' financial audits

By Jo ANNE EMBLETON
NEWS@THECHEROKEEAN.COM

RUSK – An audit for Cherokee County's fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2024, received an "unmodified" finding from the Waco-based firm that performs the annual review, with information provided to county leaders during a June 25 Commissioners' Court meeting.

According to County Auditor Steven Daughety, "the same findings from last year's audit were in this year's audit as well (Tax Office Fraud and Solid Waste Internal Controls). They relate to what corrective actions we are taking to improve internal controls and procedures to ensure that funds are properly secured." Pattillo, Brown & Hill, LLP – who handles the annual audit for the county – also performed a Single Audit of that period, which Daughety said is the first time since 2017 this type of audit has been performed. The county also received an unmodified opinion for that audit.

"A Single Audit is an organization-wide financial statement and federal awards' audit of a non-federal entity that expends \$750,000 or more in federal funds in one year," Daughety explained. "It is intended to provide assurance to the federal government that a non-federal entity has adequate internal controls in place and is generally in compliance with program requirements."

Digital copies of these audits will be posted to the county website, <http://www.co.cherokee.tx.us/ips/cms/index.html> – look for it under the link "financial reports." In other action, county leaders also:

- Extended by seven days a Local State of Disaster order for the county, effective immediately
- Approved sale of duty weapon to Cherokee County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Christopher Monroe, who is retiring
- Approved 2024-2025 Health, Life & Dental Insurance Plans for Cherokee County Employees
- Approved Cherokee County Healthy County Wellness contacts for 2024-25
- Approved continuation of County Specific Incentive Program for Cherokee County Employees
- Approved a list of 2025 Cherokee County holidays
- Nominated Jerod (Jed) Morris of Alto to fill the unexpired term of Jim Tarrant on the Cherokee Central Appraisal District Board of Directors
- Approved request from Precinct 4 to transfer \$30,000 in funds from line item New Trucks (017.830.450) into Equipment Rental (017.830.573)
- Approved the May 2024 monthly CCSO report from Sheriff Brent Dickson: That month, the department received a total of 3,496 calls, of which 1,417 were 9-1-1 calls, 65 were alarm calls, 75 were fire calls and 113 animal

control calls/complaints. Prisoner intake for May was 153, with 171 prisoners released; the average daily inmate was 166. Six prisoners awaited TDCJ transfer, with the same amount sent to TDCJ. Meanwhile, CCSO served 116 civil processes in May, collecting a total of \$8,371.17 in fees. In May, a total of 104 offense cases were reported.

- Approved a consent agenda that included a Final Plat creating Lots 1-3 of Oak Three Estates in the Jacob Mast Survey, Abstract No. 546, Cherokee County, Texas. No Roads.

A workshop with the county's ARPA grant administrator to review where Cherokee County currently stands in the utilization of American Rescue Plan Act funds also was conducted during the June 25 meeting.

The county was awarded \$10.2 million in federal ARPA funding, with a majority of that amount dedicated to various projects. These funds – as well as that not initially dedicated to projects – must be obligated by the end of December.

Daughety said that as of the current amount of funds in the latter category "is around \$346,000," with the court considering "using future payroll to obligate, or commit, the funds before the Dec. 31, 2024, deadline."

County leaders will hold a July 23 workshop with the grant administrator to consider additional options.



Notice of Public Hearing on Cherokee Central Appraisal District Budget

The Cherokee Central Appraisal District will hold a public hearing on a proposed budget for the 2025 fiscal year.

The public hearing will be held on Thursday, July 18th, at 8:30 am at CCAD Board Room located at 111 East 6th Street, Rusk, Texas. A summary of the appraisal district budget follows:

The total amount of the proposed budget.	\$ 2,189,560
The total amount of DECREASE compared to the current year's budget.	\$ -21,220
The number of employees compensated under the proposed budget.	16.5
The number of employees compensated under the current budget.	14.5

The appraisal district is supported solely by payments from the local taxing units served by the appraisal district.

If approved by the appraisal district board of directors at the public hearing, this proposed budget will take effect automatically unless disapproved by the governing bodies of the county, school districts, cities and towns served by the appraisal district.

A copy of the proposed budget is available for public inspection in the office of each of those governing bodies. A copy is also available for public inspection at the appraisal district office at 107 E. 6th St., Rusk, Texas

The phone number of Cherokee Central Appraisal District is: 903-683-2296. The address is: 107 E. 6th St., Rusk, Texas

Top Cheer

Jacksonville High School was represented well recently in Arlington by student cheerleader Briely Bateman and Coach Demi Dotson. Bateman was named to the TGCA 1A-4A All-Star team, performing at the All-Star basketball game, while Dotson was selected to coach the Blue All-Star team. Photo courtesy of JHS Cheer

