

Washington, D.C., Elections

Little Soul Searching as Connecticut's Congressmen Talk Presidential Debate

— Juliann Ventura, 6.28.2024



President Joe Biden and Former President Donald Trump debate on Thursday (Credit CNN)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy was the only Connecticut lawmaker who turned to X during last night's CNN-hosted presidential debate, slamming former President Trump for his false claims and response to the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol rioters in 2021.

“There’s not a single Trump answer without a nuclear-grade bonkers lie,” Sen. Murphy **said** in his first of three posts on X about the debate. Trump made more than 30 false claims during the debate, according to **CNN**. Biden made at least nine false or misleading claims.

In his second and third posts, Sen. Murphy condemned Trump for what he saw as “defending the January 6th rioters and traitors.” In the past, Trump **has spoken** of pardoning Jan. 6 rioters if he’s elected. During last night’s debate, he called them “innocent.”

Murphy **posted** on Friday afternoon saying that he's "more panicked than ever at Trump's agenda," referring to **Project 2025**, a game plan of policy proposals from the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation. Though, Trump and his campaign have mostly kept the plan at arm's length, not publicly endorsing it.

While Murphy was not shy in his digs against Trump on X during the debate, he didn't mention President Biden at all – a surprise since there was **reportedly** so much panic within the Democratic base surrounding Biden's performance. **Musings** about Biden stepping down and the party rallying behind another nominee circulated social media throughout the debate and into Friday morning.

"He (Biden) had a test to meet tonight to restore confidence of the country and of the base, and he failed to do that," said Van Jones, a former special advisor to Barack Obama, on **CNN** last night. "I think there's a lot of people who are going to want to see him consider taking a different course now. We're still far from our convention and there is time for this party to figure out a different way forward if he will allow us to do that."

However, some leaders in the party were at least outwardly staunch in their support for the president. California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who's name has been thrown around as a potential Democratic nominee if Biden stepped down, said that this panic over Biden's performance is "unhelpful" and "unnecessary."

"We've got to have the back of the president," Newsom said in an interview on **MSNBC** after the debate. "You don't turn your back because of one performance."

Like Murphy, Barack Obama turned to X Wednesday evening with a post that didn't explicitly name Biden, but included a link to the president's campaign website in support of him.

"Bad debate nights happen," Obama said in the post. He went on to compare both of the candidate's characters, arguing that Biden "tells the truth" and "knows right from wrong and will give it to the American people straight."

Friday morning, Rep. Larson released a statement criticizing Trump's response to Social Security and defending Biden, who has proposed raising taxes for the wealthiest Americans to make the program solvent.

"Last night, the differences were clear on Social Security. President Biden called for strengthening Social Security by finally making billionaires and millionaires pay their fair share," Larson said in the press release, while claiming that Trump is trying to "protect the super-wealthy."

Last night, Trump slammed Biden on the issue. "This man," Trump **said**, motioning toward Biden, "is going to single-handedly destroy Social Security," claiming that Biden will wipe out Social Security before steering the conversation to immigration.

In a statement, Rep. Courtney acknowledged that Biden's performance was below par and argued that it "overshadowed the blatant falsehoods President Trump uttered."

"For example," Courtney said in the statement, "despite Mr. Trump's assertion last night, it was President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, which passed without a single Republican vote in 2022, that cut insulin's price to \$35 per month." **Politico** fact-checked Trump's assertion that he brought insulin prices down for seniors and found it to be largely misleading since Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act into law, which caps insulin copays for Medicare patients at \$35 per month.

Like Courtney, Rep. Rosa Delauro also addressed Biden's performance in a statement.


"I'm sure President Biden is disappointed with his performance last night but I believe the contrast between choices is stark," she said in the statement. Relying on Biden's defense of women's right to reproductive freedom, she added, "President Biden has fought to defend this right and enshrine it into law."

Rep. Jim Himes also defended Biden in a statement, calling him the country's "most effective leader in recent history" and asking voters to "consider both candidates' records in office."

"The hardest job in the world is not defined by a single night on the debate

stage,” Himes said in the statement. He also slammed Trump by calling him a “convicted felon,” referring to the former president’s conviction last month where he was found **guilty** of 34 felony charges for illegally trying to influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment.

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