

**ORAL ARGUMENT NOT YET SCHEDULED**

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No. 19-5117

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UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

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**LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD, *et al.*,**  
Plaintiffs-Appellants,

v.

**FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION,**  
Defendant-Appellee.

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On Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the District of Columbia

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**CORRECTED BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE*  
COMMISSION ON PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES  
IN SUPPORT OF DEFENDANT-APPELLEE  
AND IN SUPPORT OF AFFIRMANCE**

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## **CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

Pursuant to Rule 26.1 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, *Amicus Curiae* Commission on Presidential Debates hereby certifies that it is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation. It has no parent corporation and no publicly held corporation owns 10 percent or more of its stock.

**CERTIFICATE AS TO PARTIES, RULINGS, AND RELATED CASES**

Pursuant to Circuit Rule 28(a)(1), *Amicus Curiae* Commission on Presidential Debates hereby certifies as follows:

**A. Parties and Amici**

All parties, intervenors, and amici appearing before the district court are listed in the Brief for Appellants. All parties, intervenors, and amici appearing in this Court are listed in the Brief for Appellee.

**B. Rulings Under Review**

References to the rulings at issue appear in the Brief for Appellee.

**C. Related Cases**

This case has not previously been before this Court or any other court except for the district court. The Commission on Presidential Debates is not aware of any related cases within the meaning of Circuit Rule 28(a)(1)(C).

Dated: November 12, 2019

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT..... i

CERTIFICATE AS TO PARTIES, RULINGS AND RELATED CASES.....ii

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES.....iv

STATEMENT OF IDENTITY, INTEREST IN CASE, AND SOURCE OF  
AUTHORITY TO FILE.....vi

I. INTRODUCTION.....1

II. BACKGROUND.....4

III. ARGUMENT.....10

    A. Appellants’ Requested Relief Would Trample Debate Sponsors’ First  
    Amendment Rights.....10

    B. Whether CPD Is a Proper Sponsoring Organization Under FEC Regulations  
    Is Determined by Assessing Its Conduct *as an Organization*.....12

    C. CPD’s 15 Percent Standard Is the Same Standard Employed by the League  
    of Women Voters.....15

CONCLUSION.....18

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH TYPE-VOLUME LIMIT, TYPEFACE  
REQUIREMENTS, AND TYPE-STYLE REQUIREMENTS.....19

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE.....20

## TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

	Page(s)
<b><u>FEDERAL CASES</u></b>	
<i>Ark. Educ. Television Comm’n v. Forbes</i> , 523 U.S. 666 (1998).....	10, 11
<i>Buchanan v. Fed. Election Comm’n</i> , 112 F. Supp. 2d 58 (D.D.C. 2000).....	11
<i>Buckley v. Valeo</i> , 424 U.S. 1 (1976).....	12
<i>Citizens United v. Fed. Election Comm’n</i> , 558 U.S. 310 (2010).....	14
<i>Fed. Election Comm’n v. Beaumont</i> , 539 U.S. 146 (2003).....	14
<i>Fulani v. Brady</i> , 935 F.2d 1324 (D.C. Cir. 1991).....	7
<i>Hurley v. Irish-Am. Gay, Lesbian &amp; Bisexual Grp. of Boston</i> , 515 U.S. 557 (1995).....	10
<i>Johnson v. Commission on Presidential Debates</i> , 869 F.3d 976 (D.C. Cir. 2017).....	11
<i>Level the Playing Field v. FEC</i> , 232 F. Supp. 3d 130 (D.D.C. 2017).....	13
<i>McConnell v. Fed. Election Comm’n</i> , 540 U.S. 93 (2003).....	14
<i>McCutcheon v. Fed. Election Comm’n</i> , 572 U.S. 185 (2014).....	12
<b><u>FEDERAL REGULATIONS</u></b>	
11 C.F.R. § 110.13(a)(1).....	12
11 C.F.R. § 110.13(c).....	8

**OTHER AUTHORITIES**

2020 Candidate Financial Totals, Fed. Election Comm’n,  
http://www.fec.gov/data/elections/president /2020/ .....7

Fed. Election Comm’n, AO 1984-12, 1984 WL 1022490 .....14

Tax Guide for Churches & Religious Organizations, IRS Pub. 1828 at  
8 (Jan. 1, 2012).....14

**STATEMENT OF IDENTITY, INTEREST IN THE CASE, AND SOURCE  
OF AUTHORITY TO FILE**

The Commission on Presidential Debates is a private 501(c)(3) organization that sponsors televised general election presidential debates and has done so for more than 30 years. The Commission on Presidential Debates set the debate participant criteria at issue in the instant appeal, giving it a clear interest in this appeal's outcome. All parties in this matter have consented to the Commission on Presidential Debate's participation in this matter as *amicus curiae*. No party's counsel authored this brief in whole or in part, and no party, counsel to a party, or person other than the Commission on Presidential Debates contributed money toward the preparation or filing of this brief.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Presidential Debates (“CPD”) is a private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that sponsors general election presidential debates. It is a private actor, governed by an independent board of volunteer directors. It enjoys no governmental designation or entitlement to serve as *the* sponsor of presidential debates. The debates it plans only proceed if the invited candidates agree to debate under its sponsorship.

CPD has chosen as its mission to host televised debates between or among the leading candidates for President and Vice President of the United States in the final weeks of a long campaign season. (A-1294.) In determining its approach to debate invitations, the CPD takes the campaign as it finds it in the final weeks of a very long campaign season. CPD invites to participate in its debates any candidate, *regardless of party affiliation*, who is qualified under the Constitution to be president, is on the ballot in enough states to garner a theoretical Electoral College majority, and has a level of public support of at least 15 percent as reflected in the average of five high-quality, national public opinion polls conducted shortly before the debates. (A-1299.)

Appellants prefer, and seek to have the government compel, a different approach. Through administrative complaints and a petition for rulemaking filed with the Federal Election Commission (“FEC”), Appellants seek to have the

government require that CPD (and any other sponsor of general election presidential debates) invite at least one candidate who does not enjoy substantial public support as measured by public opinion polling but, rather, who qualifies for inclusion based on some non-poll based standard. Appellants have suggested that an invitation be extended to the candidate who has gathered the most ballot access signatures by April 30 of an election year, regardless of that candidate's level of support among the electorate as the election draws near and the general election debates are held. (A-727.) Appellants would like for this selected candidate to be given the opportunity to use the debates as a springboard for his or her candidacy.

Appellants' proposed approach is highly impractical, which illustrates that it is far easier to criticize a sponsor's poll-based set of criteria than it is to devise a workable alternative.<sup>1</sup> But the flaws in Appellants' proposal are not what prompts this brief. CPD submits this brief to highlight three points.

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<sup>1</sup> Appellants' proposed signature gathering competition approach to determining debate invitations is deeply flawed. Appellants' own expert acknowledged that the act of signing requires the voter only to "attest[] that the candidate . . . deserves to be considered at the polls," and not that the voter actually supports or prefers that candidate to others. (Expert Rep. of M. Arno, Pls.' Petition for Rulemaking, Ex. 28, at ¶ 21 (Sept. 10, 2014), <http://sers.fec.gov/fosers/> (search for REG No. 2014-06, then select "Commencing Document").) It also makes little sense to determine debate invitations based on a metric frozen in time in April for debates to be held in the Fall, particularly since the deadline for signature gathering and ballot access in most states is well after April 30. Further, the logistics of validating signatures as part of determining who has the most signatures would be a daunting task and one that would inevitably lead to legal challenges. Further, there is little chance that the

First, Appellants ask that the FEC's regulations be read or revised to *prohibit* a private debate sponsor from limiting participation in its debates to those candidates in whom the public has demonstrated the greatest interest as measured by well-respected public opinion polls. Appellants' requested relief is plainly unconstitutional. The law is clear: A debate sponsor not only may so limit participation in its debates, it would violate a private debate sponsor's First Amendment rights to preclude it from doing so.

Second, when addressing whether CPD is a proper "staging organization" under the FEC's regulations, the proper inquiry is whether CPD complies with the regulatory requirement that it not "endorse, support or oppose political candidates or parties." Appellants plainly cannot demonstrate that CPD violates this standard, so they seek to substitute an ill-defined inquiry that focuses on protected First Amendment activities of, and statements by, former and current CPD directors *in their individual capacities*. The proper focus under the FEC's regulations necessarily is on CPD's activities as an organization.

Third, at bottom, the Appellants have a policy preference, not a valid legal claim. To advance their public policy agenda, Appellants have attacked the not-for-profit CPD and its volunteer directors with a no-holds-barred approach. Because

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true leading candidates, who are not legally obligated to debate, would agree to share the stage with a candidate that enjoys scant public support.

CPD's approach to candidate selection is publicly known and entirely transparent in operation, Appellants attack the 15 percent standard as an unreasonable barrier to debate participation selected by an allegedly partisan organization for the very purpose of excluding non-major party candidates. Appellants dismiss the reasons supporting CPD's approach as contrivances designed to conceal an agenda hostile to non-major party candidates. But Appellants' core thesis runs aground on the shoals of an inconvenient truth: CPD's 15 percent threshold is identical to the threshold adopted by the League of Women Voters when it sponsored televised presidential debates. (JA1399-1400.) Appellants themselves laud the League of Women Voters as "a strictly nonpartisan organization." (A-693.)

The FEC correctly dismissed the complaint and petition to open a rulemaking proceeding and the district court properly dismissed Appellants' complaint.

## II. BACKGROUND

**The Commission on Presidential Debates.** CPD is a private 501(c)(3) organization. CPD's primary mission is to ensure, for the benefit of the American electorate, that general election debates are held every four years between and among the leading candidates who have a realistic (i.e., more than theoretical) chance of being elected to the offices of President and Vice President of the United States.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The background information in this section appears at *Commission on Presidential Debates: An Overview*, <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=overview>.

CPD has sponsored general election presidential debates in every election since 1988.

CPD is an independent organization. It is not controlled by any political party or outside organization and it does not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates or parties. It receives no funding from the government or any political party, political action committee or candidate. CPD is governed by an independent Board of Directors. The CPD Board presently is jointly chaired by Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr., Dorothy S. Ridings, and Kenneth Wollack.<sup>3</sup> Although at the time CPD was formed, its co-founders, Paul G. Kirk, Jr. and Mr. Fahrenkopf served, respectively, as chairmen of the Democratic National Committee and Republican National Committee, their terms ended some thirty years ago, in 1989. In the intervening 30 years, no sitting officer of either major party has had any affiliation with CPD and the major parties have no role whatsoever in running CPD or setting its policies. Co-Chair Dorothy Ridings is the former President of the League of Women Voters. In addition to the Co-Chairs, the current Board consists of the

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<sup>3</sup> Ms. Ridings was elected co-chair of CPD in December 2016. (A-1286.) Mr. Wollack, formerly the president of the National Democratic Institute and a current director of the National Endowment for Democracy, was elected to serve as CPD's third co-chair in October 2019. *See Commission on Presidential Debates Elects Kenneth Wollack as Co-Chair* (Oct. 1, 2019), <https://www.debates.org/2019/10/01/commission-on-presidential-debates-elects-kenneth-wollack-as-co-chair>.

following distinguished Americans, all of whom volunteer their time to serve on the CPD Board:

John C. Danforth, *Former U.S. Senator*

Charles Gibson, *Former Anchor, ABC World News with Charles Gibson*

John Griffen, *Managing Director, Allen & Company LLC*

Yvonne Hao, *Managing Director and Co-founder, Cove Hill Partners*

Jane Harman, *Director, President and CEO, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*

Antonia Hernandez, *President and CEO, California Community Foundation*

Reverend John I. Jenkins, *President, University of Notre Dame*

Jim Lehrer, *Former Executive Editor and Anchor of the PBS NewsHour*

Newton N. Minow, *Senior Counsel, Sidley Austin LLP*

Richard D. Parsons, *Senior Advisor, Providence Equity Partners LLC*

Olympia Snowe, *Former U.S. Senator*

CPD obtains the funds required to produce its debates every four years and to support its ongoing voter education activities from the communities that host the debates and, to a lesser extent, from corporate, foundation, and private donors.

Donors have no input into the management of any of CPD's activities and have no input into the process by which CPD selects debate participants.

**Candidate Selection Criteria.** One of the most challenging issues faced by any debate sponsor is candidate selection. Scores of candidates run for president every election cycle, many of whom do not seek the nomination of either major party. *See* 2020 Candidate Financial Totals, Fed. Election Comm'n, <https://www.fec.gov/data/elections/president/2020/> (last visited November 7, 2019) (reporting that there are already 573 candidates for US President in 2020 who have registered *and* have filed a financial report, hundreds of whom are not seeking the nomination of either major party). CPD applies its nonpartisan candidate selection criteria in the final weeks of a long general election campaign. (A-1298-1300.) CPD's selection criteria have always sought to identify the individuals whose public support has made them the leading candidates. (A-1298-99.)

Candidates for federal office are not required to debate. History teaches that it is speculative at best to assume that the leading candidates would agree to share the stage with candidates enjoying only scant public support.<sup>4</sup> In the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections, for instance, the major party candidates declined invitations

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<sup>4</sup> *See Fulani v. Brady*, 935 F.2d 1324, 1329 (D.C. Cir. 1991) (acknowledging that it is speculative at best to assume the leading candidates would agree to share the stage with candidates enjoying only scant public support).

to participate in debates that included third party and independent candidates, including Libertarian Party nominee Gary Johnson and Green Party nominee Jill Stein.<sup>5</sup> Thus, a sponsor of general election debates that aims to provide the electorate with a focused debate that includes the leading candidates faces a difficult task. The sponsor needs to be inclusive enough to invite each of those candidates, *regardless of party affiliation*, whose level of public support genuinely qualifies him or her as a leading candidate. At the same time, the sponsor should not take an approach that is so inclusive that invitations to candidates with scant public support cause the leading candidates to decline the invitation to debate. The CPD strives to strike this balance in an appropriate fashion.

FEC regulations require a debate sponsor to make its candidate selection decisions on the basis of “pre-established, objective” criteria. *See* 11 C.F.R. § 110.13(c). Under the CPD’s Non-Partisan Candidate Selection Criteria, in addition to being constitutionally eligible, candidates must appear on a sufficient number of state ballots to have a mathematical chance of winning a majority vote in the Electoral College, and have a level of support of at least 15 percent of the national

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<sup>5</sup>*See, e.g.*, 2016 Free and Equal Presidential Debate, The Free and Equal Elections Foundation (Nov. 1, 2016), *available at* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzM4p23uLbE>; Third Party Presidential Candidates Debate, C-Span (Oct. 23, 2012) (including Gary Johnson and Jill Stein), *available at* <http://www.c-span.org/video/?308995-1/third-party-presidential-candidates-debate>.

electorate as determined by five selected national public opinion polling organizations, using the average of those organizations' most recent publicly-reported results at the time of the determination. (A-1299.) In 2016, as in prior debate cycles, the polls relied upon were selected based on the recommendations of the Editor-in-Chief of the Gallup Organization based on the quality of the methodology employed, the reputation of the polling organizations, and the frequency of the polling conducted. (A-1299-1300.) CPD announced the identity of the selected polling organizations well in advance of the time the criteria were applied. (*Id.*)

The CPD has announced that it will apply substantially the same criteria in 2020. *See Commission on Presidential Debates Announces Sites and Dates for 2020 General Election Debates and 2020 Nonpartisan Candidate Selection Criteria*, (Oct. 11, 2019), <https://www.debates.org/2019/10/11/commission-on-presidential-debates-announces-sites-and-dates-for-2020-general-election-debates-and-2020-nonpartisan-candidate-selection-criteria>. The CPD adopted its 2020 criteria based on the recommendations of a working group of its Board chaired by former League of Women Voters President Dorothy Ridings, who serves as a CPD Co-Chair. *Id.* At the time the Criteria were announced, Ridings stated, "We concluded that the CPD serves its voter education mission best when, in the final weeks of the campaign, based on pre-established, published, objective and transparent criteria, it

identifies those individuals whose public support places them among the leading candidates and invites them to debate the issues of the day. We also concluded that the best available measure of public support is high-quality public opinion polling conducted near the time of the debates.” *Id.*

### III. ARGUMENT

#### **A. Appellants’ Requested Relief Would Trample Debate Sponsors’ First Amendment Rights.**

Appellants insist that the FEC’s debate regulations be read or revised to compel private debate sponsors to invite one or more candidates who do not enjoy substantial public support as reflected in public opinion polls. The goal, as lead Appellant’s name trumpets, is to “level the playing field.” Appellants’ coercive goal is unconstitutional.

CPD and other debate sponsors engage in protected speech and expressive conduct: they develop candidate selection criteria, identify the candidates who meet the criteria, and invite them to debate in a forum created by the debate staging organization. *Ark. Educ. Television Comm’n v. Forbes*, 523 U.S. 666, 674 (1998) (debate sponsor’s compilation of the speech of third parties is a communicative act); *see also Hurley v. Irish-Am. Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Grp. of Boston*, 515 U.S. 557, 573 (1995) (holding that a parade organizer is a speaker that has the autonomy to choose the content of his own message).

The D.C. Circuit twice has expressly addressed CPD's constitutional right to select the participants in the debates it sponsors, most recently in a case brought by certain of Appellants herein. In *Johnson v. Commission on Presidential Debates*, 869 F.3d 976 (D.C. Cir. 2017), the plaintiffs alleged that CPD's 15 percent criterion violated, *inter alia*, federal antitrust laws. In affirming the district court's dismissal of that claim, the D.C. Circuit made clear that a ruling that CPD cannot limit debate participation to those candidates who meet its candidate selection criteria would violate CPD's First Amendment rights:

Plaintiffs' requested relief—whether stated in the form of a request for injunctive relief or damages—amounts to a request for a declaratory judgment stating that [CPD] is not entitled to exclude certain individuals from its debates. On this point, we must agree with this Court's opinion in *Perot v. Fed. Election Comm'n*: “[I]f this [C]ourt were to enjoin the [CPD] from staging the debates or from choosing debate participants, there would be a substantial argument that the [C]ourt would itself violate the [CPD's] First Amendment rights.

*Id.* at 981.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See also *Forbes*, 523 U.S. at 682-83 (even when a debate sponsor is a state actor, unlike CPD, and therefore subject to the limitations of the First Amendment when issuing debate invitations, the Supreme Court has expressly approved such sponsor's exclusion of a candidate based on his or her lack of voter support); *Buchanan v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 112 F. Supp. 2d 58, 75 (D.D.C. 2000) (noting that “[i]t is difficult to understand why it would be unreasonable or subjective to consider the extent of a candidate's electoral support prior to the debate . . .” and upholding the FEC's determination that CPD's 15 percent threshold was objective and lawful).

The Federal Election Campaign Act (“FECA”), pursuant to which the FEC adopted its debate regulations, was enacted to limit “the actuality and appearance of corruption . . .” and the Supreme Court has recognized that its restrictions “operate in an area of the most fundamental First Amendment activities.” *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 14 (1976). Here, Appellants do not seek to prevent corruption, but “to level the playing field” for non-major party candidates. The Supreme Court, however, has repeatedly denounced efforts to use the federal election laws to equalize electoral opportunities because “the concept that government may restrict the speech of some elements of our society in order to enhance the relative voice of others is wholly foreign to the First Amendment . . . .” *Id.* at 48-49. Notably, especially given the name lead Appellant has selected for itself and Appellants’ goal herein, the Supreme Court has stated, “[I]t is not an acceptable government objective to ‘level the playing field’ . . . or to ‘equaliz[e] the financial resources of candidates.’” *McCutcheon v. Fed. Election Comm’n*, 572 U.S. 185, 207 (2014) (emphasis added). In short, the coercive relief Appellants seek runs afoul of the First Amendment.

**B. Whether CPD Is a Proper Sponsoring Organization Under FEC Regulations Is Determined by Assessing Its Conduct as an Organization.**

FEC regulations require debate staging organizations to be tax exempt organizations (under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) or (4)), “which do not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates or political parties . . . .” 11 C.F.R. § 110.13(a)(1).

When addressing the meaning of the phrase “supports, endorses, or opposes political candidates or political parties,” the district court turned to dictionary definitions, suggesting a “plain meaning” test, *Level the Playing Field v. FEC*, 232 F. Supp. 3d 130, 139 n.6 (D.D.C. 2017), as did the FEC on remand, (A-1349).

Under a “plain meaning” approach, Appellants offer no evidence whatsoever that CPD, *as an organization*, “endorses, supports or opposes” candidates or political parties. Many organizations run ads or issue endorsements in support of or in opposition to candidates or parties. CPD does none of those things, and Appellants do not contend otherwise. Simply stated, insofar as CPD indisputably is tax exempt under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) and insofar as there is no evidence whatsoever that CPD “endorses, supports or opposes” political parties or candidates, the inquiry as to whether it is a proper sponsoring organization is straightforward.

Not content with this result, Appellants seek to shift the inquiry from CPD’s actions as an organization and, instead, focus on political activities by current or former directors *in their individual capacities* and cherry-picked statements attributed to selected former or current directors (many from long ago) *in their individual capacities*. This is a deeply flawed approach.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Appellants’ assertions of fact concerning actions of individual directors, many wholly unsupported by record citations, are inaccurate in numerous ways and are beyond what CPD can address in this short brief.

Appellants cite no authority for the Constitution-bending assertion that only individuals who have refrained from exercising their First Amendment right to participate in the political process in a personal capacity are eligible to serve as directors of a debate staging organization under the FEC's regulations. Merely to state the proposition is to reveal its wrong-headedness. Indeed, even the IRS does not ignore the distinction between acts committed in a board member's official capacity and acts committed in his or her personal capacity in determining whether an organization participates in a political campaign in violation of § 501(c)(3). *See, e.g., Tax Guide for Churches & Religious Organizations*, IRS Pub. 1828 at 8 (Jan. 1, 2012), <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1828.pdf> (recognizing that a religious leader's endorsement of a candidate in his or her individual capacity does not constitute political campaign intervention by the 501(c)(3) tax exempt church).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It is beyond reasonable dispute that board members or directors and the organizations they serve are not one and the same. The federal election laws recognize this distinction. Although the FECA, for instance, imposes restrictions on corporate political activities, the Supreme Court has acknowledged that "a ban on direct corporate contributions leaves individual members of corporations free to make their own contributions . . . ." *Fed. Election Comm'n v. Beaumont*, 539 U.S. 146, 161 n.8 (2003); *see also McConnell v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 540 U.S. 93, 177 (2003) (recognizing that the ban on national, state, and local party committees' solicitation of funds for 501(c) organizations "in no way restricts solicitations by party officers acting in their individual capacities."). The distinction between the political activities of separate legal entities holds true even when organizations create political action committees for the specific purpose of supporting candidates or parties. *See Citizens United v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 558 U.S. 310, 337-38 (2010); *see also Fed. Election Comm'n*, AO 1984-12 (May 31, 1984), *available at* 1984 WL 1022490 (acknowledging the distinction between an organization and the

Moreover, it is difficult to conceive of an organization that would qualify as a debate sponsor under Appellants' test, which requires board members in their individual capacities to have refrained (without time limitation) from exercising their First Amendment rights to support candidates or otherwise participate in the political process. Appellants' arguments in this regard should be flatly rejected.<sup>9</sup>

**C. CPD's 15 Percent Standard Is the Same Standard Employed by the League of Women Voters.**

Appellants argue that the 15 percent threshold is an unreasonably high barrier to entry erected by an organization committed to preserving a two-party system.<sup>10</sup>

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political action committee created by its board members in their individual capacities).

<sup>9</sup> Notably, Appellant Level the Playing Field ("LPF") would fail to meet its own test for nonpartisanship. LPF's directors, as individuals, have made contributions to political candidates (including Hillary Clinton). *See* Transaction Query by Individual Contributor, FEC, <http://classic.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/norindsea.shtml> (based on individual queries of the following LPF directors as identified in Form 990 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax for the 2015 Tax Year: Peter Ackerman, Kahlil J Byrd, Joshua Levine, and Cara McCormick). Yet, LPF describes itself as a "nonpartisan, nonprofit corporation" in Appellants' Complaint. (A-016.) Likewise, Appellants' amici acknowledge that individuals can and do act in different capacities at different times. The Nonprofit Leaders, Scholars and Practitioners state in their brief that "each *amicus* submits this brief in his or her personal capacity only." Corrected Br. of Amici Curiae Nonprofit Leaders, Scholars and Practitioners in Supp. of Pls.-Appellants, at 1 n.2.

<sup>10</sup> Appellants' critiques of CPD's reliance on polling ring particularly hollow in light of the fact that the Libertarian presidential and vice presidential candidates participated in presidential primary debates that were limited to the "leading candidates," as determined by an *online poll*. *See* John Stossel, *What are Libertarians doing wrong?*, FOX NEWS (Mar. 9, 2016), <http://www.foxnews.com>

CPD has submitted extensive evidence explaining the careful process by which it adopted its candidate selection criteria and why it adopted those criteria. (*See, e.g.*, A-1094-1111, 1281-84, 1286-94, 1296-1304.)

In short, CPD has concluded that its selection criteria advance its voter education goal of affording the members of the public, in the final weeks of a very long campaign season, an opportunity to sharpen their views, in a focused debate format, of the leading candidates who have a realistic chance of being elected President and Vice President of the United States. (A-1294.) In so doing, CPD takes the campaign as it finds it, using the best known measure of candidate support, (A1123), to identify the individuals whom the public has made the leading candidates by virtue of whom they support. As noted earlier, the sponsor needs to be inclusive enough to invite each of those candidates, *regardless of party affiliation*, whose level of public support genuinely qualifies him or her as a leading candidate. At the same time, the sponsor should not take an approach that is so inclusive that invitations to candidates with scant public support cause the leading candidates to

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/opinion/2016/03/09/stossel-what-are-libertarians-doing-wrong.html (explaining criteria for selecting “leading” Libertarian presidential candidates to participate in the Fox Business Network debate); WNCN (CBS North Carolina), *Libertarian Party to hold presidential debate* (Mar. 7, 2016), <http://wncn.com/2016/03/07/libertarian-party-to-hold-presidential-debate/>.

decline the invitation to debate. CPD has concluded that the 15 percent standard strikes this balance in an appropriate manner.

Appellants disregard all of this as pretextual and seek to paint the 15 percent standard as an unreasonable barrier to debate participation erected by an organization dedicated to excluding non-major party candidates. In doing so, Appellants ignore an inconvenient truth: 15 percent was the polling threshold adopted in the League of Women Voters' 1980 selection criteria, which resulted in the inclusion of independent candidate John Anderson in one of the League's debates. (A-1106, 1399-1400.) Appellants laud the League, stating "The League was a strictly nonpartisan organization." (A-693.) Appellants never address how the 15 percent threshold must be viewed as the unlawful and unreasonable fruit of a bipartisan conspiracy when it is the same standard earlier applied by "a strictly nonpartisan organization." There is but one answer: It is not.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The League extended automatic invitations to the nominees of the major parties and applied its 15 percent standard only to non-major party candidates. (A-1399-1400.) CPD applies the same criteria, including the 15 percent standard, to all candidates, regardless of party affiliation. Thus, the League afforded the major party candidates special treatment, given the public's historical interest in those candidates. (*Id.*) CPD does not.

## CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, CPD respectfully requests that the Court affirm the district court's judgment below.

Dated: November 12, 2019

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**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH TYPE-VOLUME LIMIT,  
TYPEFACE REQUIREMENTS, AND TYPE-STYLE REQUIREMENTS**

1. The foregoing brief complies with the type-volume limit of Rule 32(a)(5) of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure because, excluding the parts of the document exempted by Rule 32(f), this brief contains 4,217 words, according to the Word Count feature of Microsoft Word for Office 365.

2. The foregoing brief complies with the typeface requirements of Rule 32(a)(5) of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure and the type-style requirements of Rule 32(a)(6) because this brief has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Microsoft Word for Office 365 in 14-point Times New Roman font.

Dated: November 12, 2019

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 12th day of November, 2019, I caused true and correct copies of the foregoing document to be served via electronic mail upon all counsel of record, by operation of the Court's ECF system.

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