

October 6, 2016

Ms. Martha Raddatz
Chief Global Affairs Correspondent
ABC News
47 West 66th Street
New York, NY 10023

Mr. Anderson Cooper
Anderson Cooper 360 Anchor
CNN News
1 Time Warner Center, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10019

Dear Ms. Raddatz and Mr. Cooper,

The presidential debates are a critical opportunity to hold candidates accountable on issues that directly impact the daily lives of Americans. For that reason, we request that you ask the candidates about their plans to address the crisis of abortion access in our country, a crisis that threatens the health and economic security of women and families across the nation.

Safe, legal, and accessible abortion is foundational to a woman's ability to determine her own destiny. It is an issue close to the lives of Americans male and female, young and old, single and married, childless or parents. The most recent data show that one in three women will choose abortion by age 45, and the majority who make that decision will be mothers who are trying to take care of the families they already have. Despite the fact that seven in 10 Americans support legal abortion, politicians at every level of government are actively trying—and in many cases succeeding—in blocking access to what is at the end of the day a constitutionally protected right.

After the recent vice presidential debate, many commentators acknowledged that the discussion surrounding the candidates' views on abortion was the most substantive and insightful exchange of the night. The back-and-forth on Tuesday night showed how a discussion about abortion access can reveal areas of fundamental and important disagreement between the candidates while informing voters about the priorities, values, and agenda of those who seek to lead our country. Americans deserve the same insight into our candidates for president. We know Hillary Clinton has committed to expanding access to reproductive health care, and that Donald Trump has gone as far as saying a woman should be punished for her abortion.

Abortion is not a “niche” issue. Asking about abortion means asking about whether a candidate thinks women should be given every opportunity to make decisions that are best for their health. It means going beyond simple “pro-choice” and “pro-life” labels and asking the candidates about how to protect access to basic reproductive healthcare. It means asking about whether a candidate thinks a woman deserves full access to the American values of freedom, equality, and opportunity.

In past debates, moderators have typically posed questions on abortion that skirt the lived reality of countless women and instead focus on outlier cases that border on the entirely theoretical. We hope that your questions capture the true needs of women.

Below are questions we propose you ask:

1. Among all of the barriers to accessing abortion care for American women, financial burdens rank highest. This is because the Hyde Amendment prevents low-income women from using public health insurance to access this medical service, and clinic closure laws have been so detrimental that it now requires considerable financial means to take time off work, find childcare and travel long distances to access abortion care. As president, how would you ensure that the constitutional right to abortion is guaranteed to all Americans, regardless of their financial situation?

2. The Zika virus is a threat faced by countless Americans, particularly in Florida, where you two are currently fairing evenly. [Polls have shown that 6-in-10 voters](#) believe a woman should be able to access abortion if she is infected with Zika. If elected president, would you allow a woman infected with Zika to access all available healthcare options, including abortion, or would you restrict that access?

3. In Texas, where women's health clinics have closed because of laws that put restrictions on their operations, maternal mortality has doubled. As president, what steps would you take to reverse maternal mortality in this country?

Few issues are more personal and consequential than the issue of being able to choose whether, when, and with whom to start or grow a family. This issue is too important to leave unaddressed on Sunday. We hope you'll allow the candidates to talk about their differing plans to defend and expand our constitutionally protected right to access abortion.

Sincerely,

Ilyse Hogue

NARAL Pro-Choice America, President

Stephanie Schriock

EMILY's List, President

Heidi Hess

CREDO, Senior Campaign Manager

Nita Chaudhary and Shaunna Thomas

UltraViolet, Co-Founders

Silvia Henriquez and Destiny Lopez

All* Above All Action Fund, Co-Directors

Eleanor Smeal

Feminist Majority, President

Terry O'Neill

National Organization for Women, President

Planned Parenthood Action Fund