

## Productive ideas excluded from 2008 presidential debates

Contributed by Justin Seiter  
Friday, 01 February 2008  
Last Updated Friday, 01 February 2008

If you've been watching any of the recent televised presidential debates, you've probably noticed a few faces missing.

Still over nine months away from the elections, many of the less than "front-runner" presidential candidates have found themselves excluded from several of the debates.

Because the national news media has focused overwhelmingly on certain candidates—Clinton, Obama, Edwards, Romney, Giuliani, McCain, Huckabee, etc.—the other "second tier" candidates have gained much less exposure, and hence have been less successful in national polls, primaries, and caucuses.

Even before the Iowa caucuses were held, Democratic candidate Dennis Kucinich was excluded from participating in the Des Moines debate because, according to the Des Moines Register, his Iowa field director chose to work from his home office instead of a rented storefront.

Early last month Kucinich was barred from participating in the ABC and Facebook-sponsored debate before the New Hampshire primary because he failed to meet ABC's criteria: a minimum 5 percent showing in a national or New Hampshire poll or a top four finish in Iowa (which, of course, he didn't get because he was excluded from the Iowa debate).

Republican candidates Ron Paul and Duncan Hunter were excluded from a FOX News Republican debate before the New Hampshire primary for undisclosed reasons.

The New Hampshire Republican Party even went so far as to withdraw its sponsorship of the debate because of it.

Singer Melissa Ethridge told The New York Times on Jan. 5 that "corporate interests...have marginalized Mr. Kucinich because his stances on issues like the environment, health care and the war go against their interests."

Some argue that the excluded candidates threaten the status quo in America and talk about real change, and that big money corporations have deliberately impaired their campaigns. But the public and the news media have basically ignored these outcries.

Still, the only names mentioned in the news are the big ones, and most of the lesser-known candidates have since dropped out of the race.

One could assume that supporters of any of these candidates are only upset because their candidates aren't doing so well. The point is that the American public deserves to hear what EVERY candidate has to say and EVERY candidate deserves a fair chance at getting his or her message across. Just because a candidate has less support than a well-known candidate doesn't automatically discredit his or her ideas and it doesn't give anyone—no matter how much money or influence they have—the right to decide if he or she should be excluded from participating in a debate.

This is a disservice to Democracy itself. Don't let the media vote for you. Do your own research and inform yourself.

Justin Seiter is a junior from Conway, Ark. and is majoring in mass communications. He can be reached at [justinseiter@hotmail.com](mailto:justinseiter@hotmail.com).

