



**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Third Way  
**RE:** Answering Tough Debate Questions in 2020

There is no doubt that social issues remain divisive in many parts of this country. Even in an election dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Republicans will be eager to use these topics to distract from their own failures. And while often these topics are seen as vulnerabilities for battleground Democratic candidates, being prepared to answer is the best way to navigate these challenges. Below are some questions and answers around social issues that will likely arise between now and Election Day.

## Immigration

### **Do you support a moratorium on deportations?**

We need a hard reset on our immigration enforcement because we've lost our way. As part of that, I would support a temporary freeze on enforcement to get back on track and closer to the enforcement priorities of the Obama administration which focused on those convicted of serious crimes. The Trump Administration has completely eroded trust in our immigration enforcement system. Instead of carefully and diligently enforcing our laws in a way that lives up to American values, Trump has tried to deport everyone and anyone he can. This doesn't make us safer and it isn't working.

So let's be clear, this would be a temporary measure with clear exceptions for those who pose a danger to this country, in order to undo the horrific damage Trump's scattershot enforcement has inflicted.

### **Do you want to abolish ICE?**

No. I want changes and reforms that ensure our immigration laws are enforced effectively and true to our values. We shouldn't be rounding up peaceful communities, we should be focusing our limited resources on those who present a real threat. We need increased accountability and professionalism across all levels of immigration enforcement and we need solutions that create more legal ways for people to come to the US. Abolishing ICE isn't the answer.

I don't want to end up back in the same problem in another decade. We should be focused on robust reforms and safeguards, including stronger reporting mechanisms, oversight, and restoring sensible priorities to immigration enforcement. I believe that more so than abolishing or recreating ICE is the fastest path forward.

### **Do you believe we should decriminalize the border?**

I believe we have to face the fact that our border policy is a failure. A wall is expensive and ineffective. Throwing border crossers in detention and separating children from their mothers and fathers is inhumane and ineffective. Open borders, as a few have suggested, is naive.

So much of the border and immigration enforcement is front and center in our minds

because our legal immigration system is broken. We haven't passed an immigration reform bill in decades. Our attention should be focused on modernizing our process so that those who want to come to our country and contribute have real, legal ways to do so. Currently, the system pushes people outside of the process, and until we address that, we are never going to make headway.

As for decriminalizing the border, the vast majority of immigration cases are handled in civil, not criminal court and that wouldn't change if we were to decriminalize border crossings.

### **Do you support sanctuary cities?**

Our immigration system is broken because both parties in Washington are playing politics instead of trying to fix the problem. We need to solve this challenge now, rather than passing the buck to the next generation. I support a bipartisan plan to increase border security and create an earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants if they keep out of trouble, work hard, learn English, and pay taxes.

But, I oppose any policy that creates safe havens for criminals and gangs. I believe that anyone who commits a violent crime in our community should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

### **Was the Trump administration right to institute a travel ban during Covid-19?**

It's obvious the President didn't take COVID seriously. He ignored the science, compared it to the common cold, refused to wear a mask, and muzzled his own health experts. Nearly 200,000 are dead and the economy is at a standstill because he went with his conspiracy theories, and not the science. The travel ban on China was the right move, but it still had enough loopholes that 40,000 people traveled from China to the US after his ban.

Now countries are banning US citizens from coming to their countries because President Trump so badly mismanaged the crisis.

### **Do you believe immigrants take jobs away from Americans?**

Our country's prosperity is directly partnered with immigration. There is no denying that Americans are hurting economically right now. This pandemic has left thousands out of work and the continued failures to contain the spread only increase the uncertainty that many face.

It's tempting during tough times like these to circle the wagons and close ourselves off. But legal immigration creates thousands of jobs and opportunities for Americans every year and immigrants across the country have kept grocery store shelves stocked and cared for those who contracted the virus. Restrictions from the Trump Administration have also left thousands of business owners unable to meet their labor needs as they try to survive in this crisis. It's so important that we modernize our immigration system, so it works better both for Americans and for the law-abiding immigrants who help us make this country great.

## **Guns**

### **Should buying a gun require getting a license?**

Owning a gun comes with serious responsibility and we've tragically seen time and time again that it is too easy for those with horrible intent to buy a firearm. Washington has

failed to produce meaningful reforms and I think states are rightfully looking at different ways they can improve gun safety.

On gun licenses, I think that it is best for each state to decide if and how they want to implement these types of programs. Like a driver's license, these systems are created and operated at the state level. For its part, Washington can support and fund programs but each state knows best how to create a program that will work for their respective circumstances.

### **Do you support a national registry of every firearm in America?**

I think we should focus first and foremost on ensuring that dangerous firearms are kept out of the hands of those who shouldn't ever be able to buy them in the first place. That means expanding background checks so that every sale, whether at a gun show or on the internet, requires a background check. And we should be closing the dangerous loopholes that allow people to buy a gun if their background check takes longer than three days to complete.

These are commonsense measures that are supported by Americans everywhere. We've had these solutions on the table for decades, but my opponent's party continues to block them after each and every senseless tragedy. I want real and sensible reforms and I think that's where we should start.

### **Should assault weapons be banned from private ownership?**

I support our traditions of hunting and the right to defend yourself. But tragedy after tragedy in our nation's schools, gathering places, and communities has shown that weapons of war should have no place in civilian hands. Ask our surgeons on the front lines of this crisis. The destructive power and efficiency of an assault rifle are vastly different than a handgun. These are weapons solely intended to inflict the most damage possible and I support commonsense legislation that prohibits them.

## **Reproductive Rights**

### **Do you support allowing taxpayer funding to pay for abortion services?**

I understand concerns about the Hyde amendment and government funding of abortion. I also believe however that abortion, subject to reasonable safeguards, is a medical decision that should be between a woman and her doctor. And there are serious inequities that persist in access to care, including reproductive care. When the burden of cost in medical costs affects low-income communities so disproportionately, I believe we should be identifying every way possible to make reproductive care equitable.

### **Would you vote for a ban on late-term abortions?**

I think we need to look at these cases with compassion. The truth is that the vast majority of late-term abortion cases occur because a wanting mother discovers her baby has a tragic fatal condition that could only be found late in the pregnancy. It's a horrific and deeply personal situation that most of us could not imagine going through. I agree that the further along a pregnancy progresses the more concerning seeking an abortion becomes, but I would never want to substitute my judgment on this stage with the individual decisions an expecting parent may have to make.

### **Should Planned Parenthood receive federal funding?**

Planned Parenthood provides essential healthcare services to millions of Americans

across the country. Especially while we are battling a global pandemic, I think it would be unwise to limit funding to healthcare providers in any way.

Republicans at every opportunity have sought to reduce access to healthcare. It's been their primary agenda, other than giving tax breaks to corporations since they took power in 2016. Their failures on healthcare are costing this nation dearly, and instead of constraining the medical options Americans have, we should ensure that every medical provider, including Planned Parenthood, has the resources it needs to serve our communities.

## Policing

### **Should police departments have their budgets cut?**

I'm not for defunding the police. We need major reforms and rethinking in policing. It is painfully clear that there are deep inequities in the ways different communities are treated. But I don't think the answer is as simple as slashing budgets. Good governance and oversight requires resources. Funding programs and trainings that increase professionalism and community trust are vital for the path forward, as well as funding programs outside of policing, like drug courts and mental health resources so that police departments are not tasked with roles other areas of expertise are better suited to address.

Finally, there are definitely areas we should be limiting law enforcement spending. I support federal legislation that curtails local department acquisition of military hardware and weapons. I think we can all agree that the local sheriff's department doesn't need an armored personal carrier or tear gas to keep his or her community safe.

### **Do you support using federal law enforcement to protect cities from looters and violent mobs?**

Looting is not protesting, smashing store windows is not protesting, and bringing a firearm to confront protesters is not protesting. We need to turn down the heat. I don't think Donald Trump is capable of doing that. I'm not sure he wants to do that.

My concern is that Trump is not using our federal officers in these cities to ensure public safety but to antagonize and threaten Americans who he has no interest in representing. I think this was made perfectly clear when he teargassed peaceful protesters so he could go stage a photo-op.

We shouldn't tolerate looting or dangerous actions by mobs, but it's abundantly clear that we need restraint in our use of law enforcement and calm from leadership. Trump and Republicans are clearly failing at both of those.

## LGBT

### **Do you think transgender children should be able to use any restroom they want in schools?**

Yes. I want every student in America to be able to attend school true to who they are. Transgender students want the exact same thing any of our children want, the opportunity to grow and learn in an environment that is safe for everyone. While they've faced bullying and harassment, we've seen time and time again that the major fears from the other side of this issue don't materialize. Schools are more than equipped to handle inappropriate behavior by any student, but that's not the issue here. We should continue

to ensure that you can be a student true to yourself.

**Should a child born as a boy be able to play in girls' sports?**

I understand the concern here, but can we stop using children as pawns in the culture wars? Fairness is essential to sports and we all want our children to have an even chance of success. But inclusion and understanding differences is also a crucial value for our children to learn. Our goal should be to have the broadest level of inclusivity as is fair for everyone. As long as experts and science tell us the playing field is even, I want everyone to be able to participate in sports true to themselves.