

Focus | RECALL

# Debates might weed out field

By JIM WASSERMAN  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO

With 135 candidates running to replace Gov. Gray Davis, debate plans were in the works to give the unwieldy field of candidates a forum that won't break the stage.

A coalition of civil-rights groups and minority businesses and media scheduled a two-hour debate among leading contenders Sept. 9 in Los Angeles, while a statewide broadcasters group announced plans to winnow the ballot of motley candidates to six front-runners for a Sept. 17 contest in Sacramento.

Gubernatorial hopefuls will answer videotaped questions from Californians in the 90-minute live debate at California State University, Sacramento, and entry will be determined by a candidate drawing at least 10 percent support in three statewide polls before Sept. 5.

"We're trying to get the people as involved as possible and make it unlike a political debate with podiums and predictable answers," said debate monitor and California Broadcasters Association President Stan Statham. "We're trying to shake it up and shake it loose."

The debates were announced after the secretary of state's office trimmed a list of 247 would-be California governors to a record-setting list of 135. Gov. Gray Davis, who is not among the candidates on the one-of-a-kind ballot, will not participate in either debate.

Davis will instead face off with recall proponents in a taped 30-minute debate scheduled to air in September.

The New California Media and Greenlining Institute, which are sponsoring the Los Angeles debate, invited Democratic Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, independent Arianna Huffington and Green Party candidate Peter Camejo. It has also invited Republican candidates Bill Simon, Tom McClintock, actor Arnold Schwarzenegger and former baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth.

Representatives for Schwarzenegger, Simon and Ueberroth said the candidates planned to participate in debates and were reviewing the invitations but had not made any commitments.

McClintock deputy campaign manager Joe Giardiello said McClintock would be attending the Sacramento debate.

"He looks forward to debating the other candidates any time, any place. He's definitely planning to be there," Giardiello said.

Statham said the California Broadcasters Association will use statewide polls by Sept. 5 to select its six debaters.

"That gives candidates time

to get their land legs," he said. "Then the fun will be over, the seriousness begins."

If fewer than six candidates have 10 percent support, the CBA will pick the rest with an independent poll by California State University to determine which candidates among those receiving more than 5 percent are preferable.

The CBA will announce its qualifying candidates Sept. 8.

Both debates are likely to ignite controversy among dozens of candidates who won't get an opportunity to address voters.

The state's recall ballot unveiled Thursday includes celebrities, activists, college students and unknown Californians ranging from a retired meat packer to a middleweight sumo wrestler.

Comedian Jay Leno has invited all the candidates to appear in "The Tonight Show" next month. Schwarzenegger announced his candidacy on the NBC show nearly two weeks ago.

Huffington has faced questions over a report in the Los Angeles Times that she paid no state income taxes over the past two years and only \$771 in federal taxes.

Huffington lives in a \$7 million home in Brentwood and has railed against special interests that have helped "corporate fat cats get away with not paying their fair share of taxes."

She said those tax returns reflect a period when her fluctuating income from writing was low and her expenses were high.

Davis was scheduled Thursday to sign a bill establishing a new African-American research institute at California State University, Dominguez Hills. He also planned to announce his opposition to Proposition 54, an Oct. 7 ballot initiative to ban the state from collecting racial data.

With the list of candidates declared, the Secretary of State's office turned Thursday to other tasks, including a statewide sample ballot pamphlet that voters should begin receiving Sept. 2. Voters have until Sept. 22 to register for the recall.



ON AIR: John F. Kennedy, right, speaks as then-Vice President Richard Nixon listens during a televised debate in October 1960.

## Great debates: From Lincoln to Kennedy

### LINCOLN-DOUGLAS

Illinois Senate debates  
1858

In what is often considered the standard by which to compare all future debates, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas held a series of seven debates for a U.S. senate seat in 1858. Many of the debates focused on slavery; both men were against it but only Lincoln believed it should be made illegal in the territories. The style of one-on-one, audience-oriented, value-based, persuasive debate is now referred to as "Lincoln-Douglas Debate" and is practiced competitively in many schools.

### KENNEDY-NIXON

Presidential debate  
Sept. 26, 1960

Taking advantage of the fact that almost 90 percent of households had televisions in 1960, Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy arranged for the first of four televised debates. While both had fared well in debates earlier in their campaigns, Kennedy came off as television material in their first debate. TV viewers found him confident and witty, compared with the awkward and sweaty Nixon.

### REAGAN-MONDALE

Presidential debate  
Oct. 21, 1984

After a poor performance in the first of two debates, Ronald Reagan used humor in the second match-up to downplay sentiment that he was too old to be president, saying, "I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience," referring to the 56-year-old Walter Mondale. While both candidates were well-spoken in the debate, Reagan's rhetorical skill helped him to win the election.

### BENTSEN-QUAYLE

Vice presidential debate  
Oct. 5, 1988

Michael Dukakis running mate Lloyd Bentsen faced then-Vice President George H.W. Bush's running mate, Dan Quayle, the month before the election. When Quayle said he had as much experience as John Kennedy, Bentsen replied with one of the most famous lines ever to come out of a debate. "Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy." Two-thirds of opinion-poll respondents said Bentsen won the debate.

### BUSH-CLINTON-PEROT

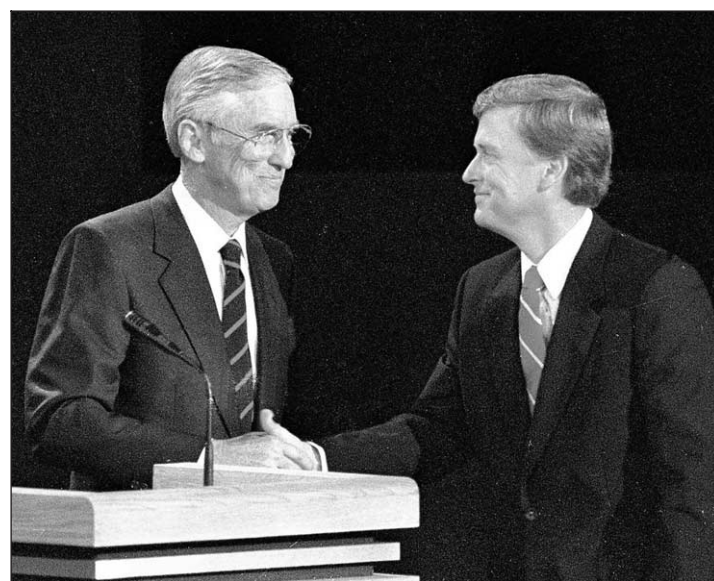
Presidential debate  
Oct. 15, 1992

The second of three presidential debates of 1992 was the first to be held in "town hall" style, with uncommitted voters from the Richmond, Va., area asking questions directly of the candidates. The men sat on stools instead of standing behind podiums, and were free to wander around the stage more than in previous debates. At one point, George H.W. Bush looked at his watch, a move many viewed as a desire to escape the encounter at which both Bill Clinton and Ross Perot were beating him.

### BUSH-GORE

Presidential debate  
Oct. 3, 2000

Democratic Vice President Al Gore tried to undercut Republican George W. Bush by barraging him with facts and figures in the first of three debates. When Bush spoke, Gore often sighed and shook his head in what appeared to be regretful disagreement. Bush attacked Gore's "fuzzy math" and tried to project himself as a common-sense candidate, in contrast to the know-it-all Gore. Polls gave Bush the edge, perhaps accounting for the 537-vote margin in Florida that made him president.



SHAKE ON IT: Lloyd Bentsen, left, and Dan Quayle in 1998.

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