



# Vice Presidential Debate Scorecard



## Vice Presidential Debate

October 2, 2008

Washington University

Moderator: Gwen Ifill

A non-partisan evaluation from  
The Communication Center, Washington, D.C.

As we enter the home stretch of the Presidential campaign, the public is paying particular attention to the communication styles of Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates.

The Communication Center has steadfastly maintained a non-partisan approach to our communication consulting throughout our 25-year history, but we offer our "Candidate Communication Scorecard" as our way of participating in the excitement of the Presidential race.

It's our hope that by highlighting the communication triumphs and challenges of two talented communicators at the top of each party ticket, we can continue to offer counsel and encouragement to individuals interested in improving their abilities to become compelling communicators.

### Joe Biden

#### Demeanor/ Delivery-

It was clear Sen. Biden was not going to let Gov. Palin claim the mantle of speaking on behalf of the middle class without a fight. Known for his sometimes long-winded answers, Sen. Biden was concise and quick to use examples from his own middle-class upbringing. Sen. Biden is an experienced debater who succeeded in not being condescending or patronizing to his opponent.

#### Best Moments-

Sen. Biden's experience and passion for diplomacy was evident in answers on Iraq,

### Sarah Palin

#### Demeanor/ Delivery-

Very folksy and plain spoken from the get-go: Greeted Sen. Biden during the walk-on with "Glad to meet you, can I call you Joe?" with lots of animated facial expressions, with eyes, eyebrows and smiles all working overtime. Gov. Palin seemed confident and assertive, addressing just about every answer in the debate directly into the camera.

#### Best Moments-

Gov. Palin stuck to the few topics that were the most comfortable for her. Her favorites:

Darfur and Bosnia. He was also effective in talking about economic issues, relaying public opinion about the state of the economy based on conversations in gas stations and Home Depot.

energy policy, her position as a Washington outsider, and her role as "hockey mom" from middle class America. These points were delivered throughout the evening with lots of punch and energy.

**Not So Best Moments -**

Politics aside, the problem with serving 35 years in the Senate is that you may know too much. Sen. Biden had difficulty addressing the wide range of questions posed during the debate without sometimes coming across as too "inside Washington," particularly with answers related to Senate procedures, votes or hearings.

**Not So Best Moments-**

Although well versed on energy policy, Gov. Palin obviously avoided some uncomfortable questions on bankruptcy policy and budget concerns by returning to energy several times, making her seem unprepared.

**Memorable Lines-**

When Sen. Biden choked up in the middle of talking about being a single parent, after his wife died and his child was injured: "I understand what it's like as a parent to wonder what it's like if your kid's going to make it."

**Memorable Lines-**

One of her most memorable lines was delivered in reaction to Sen. Biden talking about votes on legislation: "Oh yeah, it's so obvious I'm a Washington outsider. And someone just not used to the way you guys operate," ending with how Americans crave straight talk.



**Led by Susan Peterson, a veteran network correspondent for CBS and NBC News, The Communication Center is a nationally recognized leader in communication coaching and consulting since 1983. Our expert team of coaches and consultants deliver highly interactive, custom-designed media and presentation coaching across the country.**

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