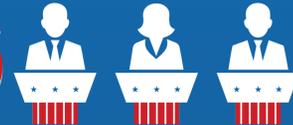


AMERICA'S CHOICE

2016



SIX PIVOTAL SIGNPOSTS ON THE ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE



1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Early Summer 2015–September 2015
Candidates announce their plans to run for office. Speeches, campaigns and glad-handing ensue.



WHAT TO WATCH FOR: Be on the lookout for the candidates who can clearly convey why they're running for office. To quote George W. Bush, this is where all eyes should be on the "vision thing." There is no simpler and more important question for candidates to answer than: *Why do you want to be President of the United States?* This early phase provides these critical answers.



2 PRIMARY DEBATES

September 2015–February 2016
Who will sink and who will swim? During the primary debates, candidates are working hard to win delegates and potential voters, with the ultimate goal of receiving their party's nomination.

The primary debates are often game changers in a nomination race. On the Republican side this cycle, just getting an invitation to the debate stage has proven to be a critical component in campaign strategy. The first GOP debate was held on August 6 in Cleveland, OH. Only the top 10 candidates in the national polls got a spot on that stage.

With a non-traditional candidate like Donald Trump lighting up the Republican field right now, it will be fascinating to see how his opponents respond to his brash style on the debate stage. Who has something to gain by taking him on? And what does Mr. Trump have to do to maintain his leading position?



WHAT TO WATCH FOR: Beyond separating the winners from the losers, the debates provide a telling test of who can handle the heat. Some candidates have a target on their back going into the debate, and how they handle the pressure of the moment can tell us a lot about how they'd handle the pressure of the most intense job in the world.

NOW IS A CRITICAL TIME FOR LOCAL JOURNALISTS TELLING THE STORIES OF CAMPAIGN 2016.

Political funds will flow toward local communications platforms, across broadcast and digital. Advertisers will seek out the news organizations that provide the most comprehensive, influential and enlightening coverage of the election. Why **not** make a land grab to dominate the political dialogue in your market this election season?

CNN NewsSource wants to help our partners shape their coverage of the 2016 election. To that end, we are bringing **Sam Feist**, CNN's DC Bureau Chief, into the mix. Sam brings an unparalleled perspective from his two decades of political leadership at CNN, overseeing Washington programming including *John King, USA*, *The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer*, *State of the Union with Candy Crowley* and *Reliable Sources*.

According to Sam, presidential election seasons can be cleanly divided into six phases, each with an opportunity to deliver a distinct and differentiated perspective to local audiences.



3 CAUCUSES & PRIMARY ELECTIONS

February 2016–April 2016
These are the early testing grounds. At the state caucuses, local party leaders gather to consider candidates, debate issues and ultimately, select their nominee. Meanwhile, at the primaries, voters select their preferred presidential candidate within their party. At the end of this phase, we'll know each party's nominees.

The calendar isn't finalized yet, but it looks like the action will kick off on February 1, 2016, at the Iowa caucuses, followed by the New Hampshire primary on February 9, 2016.



WHAT TO WATCH FOR: The two most critical pieces in the early contests are momentum and delegate collection. Once the pre-season comes to an end and voting begins, the dynamic of the race inevitably changes. Someone can skyrocket out of Iowa with a victory that provides momentum for the following contests—but the name of the game is to win a majority of delegates, so keep your sights set on the all-important delegate count.



5 PRESIDENTIAL & VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

September 2016–October 2016
For undecided voters, the debates (three presidential and one vice presidential) tend to be the most significant events of the campaign.

Few things can upend the trajectory of a campaign like a televised debate. These are the highest-profile events of the campaign with the most at stake for the candidates. If the past is any guide, we can expect one debate focused on foreign policy, one debate focused on domestic policy and two debates covering a wide range of topics.

It isn't yet clear which issues will dominate at the time of the fall general election, but you can be sure that health care, the economy, immigration, national security and the battle against ISIS will all play prominently.



WHAT TO WATCH FOR: Be on the lookout for the moment that will create a dynamic shift in the race. Obama experienced this in his 2008 campaign after a widely panned first debate, after which he had to correct course for future debates. What is the moment in 2016 that will shift the momentum of the race?



4 VEEPSTAKES & EARLY CONVENTIONS

May 2016–July 2016
As soon as each party emerges with a presumptive nominee, Veepstakes mania begins. On both sides, tons of names get floated for the #2 slot, which eventually gets narrowed down to a shortlist of three or four potential candidates. Campaigns try to control the timing of the announcement, and their cloak-and-dagger tactics are always fun to cover.

Choosing a vice presidential nominee is one of the most scrutinized decisions made by a presidential candidate—and it's a rare opportunity where the campaigns are in full control of rolling out the nominee and the message. If all goes right, they usually get to cleanly own several news cycles. And it is the best insight the public gets into a big, executive-style decision made by the presidential candidates during the campaign.

During convention season, the candidates go into general election mode. In July 2016, Republicans will converge in Cleveland, OH, and Democrats in Philadelphia, PA. The battleground states also become more evident, and receive much attention from the candidates.



WHAT TO WATCH FOR: Are the candidates running disciplined enough campaigns to prevent leaks of their VP pick? Are they selecting a true partner to govern, or trying to address potential deficiencies in their own candidacy? The conventions provide the best opportunity for the nominees to define themselves—on their own terms—to help frame the fall general election campaign.



6 ELECTION NIGHT

November 8, 2016
This is the night that more Americans will tune than any other night throughout the campaign. And all those viewers are tuning in to learn two things: Who won? And why?

As we watch the results come in state by state to see which candidate will get to 270 electoral votes, we also pore through the exit poll results that help tell us why people voted the way they did.

Election night is a quadrennial exercise where America gets to hold up a mirror to itself and ask who are we and where we want the country to go.

CNN will be covering the battleground states, the campaign headquarters, the exit polls and all the latest breaking news as a new president prepares to form an administration and set a new agenda for America.



WHAT TO WATCH FOR: All eyes will be glued to the scoreboard as the electoral votes roll in!



FOR MORE INFORMATION on Campaign 2016, including a who's who of the contenders, visit CNN Politics 2016 <http://www.cnn.com/specials/politics/2016-election>.

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