

1st Biden-Trump Debate of 2024: What They Got Wrong, and Right

The presidential candidates addressed drug pricing, abortion, immigration and the fate of the Affordable Care Act.

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President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Democratic and Republican presidential nominees, shared a debate stage June 27 for the first time since 2020, in a confrontation that — because of strict debate rules — managed to avoid the near-constant interruptions that marred their previous encounters.

Biden, who spoke in a raspy voice and often struggled to articulate his arguments, said at one point that his administration “finally beat Medicare.” Trump, meanwhile, repeated numerous falsehoods, including that Democrats want doctors to be able to abort babies after birth.

Trump took credit for the Supreme Court’s 2022 decision that upended *Roe v. Wade* and returned abortion policy to states. “This is what everybody wanted,” he said, adding “it’s been a great thing.” Biden’s response: “It’s been a terrible thing.”

In one notable moment, Trump said he would not repeal FDA approval for medication abortion, used last year in [nearly two-thirds](#) of U.S. abortions. Some conservatives have targeted the FDA’s more than 20-year-old approval of the drug mifepristone to further restrict access to abortion nationwide.

“The Supreme Court just approved the abortion pill. And I agree with their decision to have done that, and I will not block it,” Trump said. The Supreme Court ruled this month that an alliance of anti-abortion medical groups and doctors lacked standing to challenge the FDA’s approval of the drug. The court’s ruling, however, did not amount to an approval of the drug.

CNN hosted the debate, which had no audience, at its Atlanta headquarters. CNN anchors Jake Tapper and Dana Bash moderated. The debate format allowed CNN to mute candidates’ microphones when it wasn’t their turn to speak.

Our [PolitiFact partners](#) fact-checked the debate in real time as Biden and Trump clashed on the economy, immigration, and abortion, and revisited discussion of their ages. Biden, 81, has become the oldest sitting U.S. president; if Trump defeats him, he would end his second term at age 82.

You can read the [full coverage here](#) and excerpts detailing specific health-related claims follow:

Biden: “We brought down the price [of] prescription drug[s], which is a major issue for many people, to \$15 for an insulin shot, as opposed to \$400.”

Half True. Biden touted his efforts to reduce prescription drug costs by referring to the \$35 monthly insulin price cap his administration put in place as part of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. But he initially flubbed the number during the debate, saying it was lowered to \$15. In his closing statement, Biden corrected the amount to \$35.

The price of insulin for Medicare enrollees, starting in 2023, dropped to \$35 a month, not \$15. Drug pricing experts told PolitiFact when it rated a similar claim that most Medicare enrollees were likely not paying a monthly average of \$400 before the changes, although because costs vary depending on coverage phases and dosages, some might have paid that much in a given month.

Trump: “I’m the one that got the insulin down for the seniors.”

Mostly False. When he was president, Trump instituted the [Part D Senior Savings Model](#), a program that capped insulin costs at \$35 a month for some older Americans in participating drug plans.

But because it was voluntary, [only 38% of all Medicare drug plans](#), including Medicare Advantage plans, participated in 2022, according to KFF. Trump’s plan also covered only one form of each dosage and insulin type.

Biden points to the Inflation Reduction Act’s mandatory \$35 monthly insulin cap as a major achievement. This cap applies to all Medicare prescription plans and expanded to all covered insulin types and dosages. Although Trump’s model was a start, it did not have the sweeping reach that Biden’s mandatory cap achieved.

Biden: Trump “wants to get rid of the ACA again.”

Half True. In 2016, Trump campaigned on a promise to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, or ACA. In the White House, Trump supported a failed effort to do just that. He repeatedly said he would dismantle the health care law in campaign stops and social media posts throughout 2023. In March, however, Trump walked back this stance, writing on his Truth Social platform that he “isn’t running to terminate” the ACA but to make it “better” and “less expensive.” Trump hasn’t said how he would do this. He has [often promised Obamacare replacement plans](#) without ever producing one.

Trump: “The problem [Democrats] have is they’re radical, because they will take the life of a child in the eighth month, the ninth month, and even after birth.”

False. Willfully terminating a newborn’s life is infanticide and illegal in every U.S. state.

Most elected Democrats who have spoken publicly about this have said they support abortion

under Roe v. Wade's standard, which allowed access up to fetal viability — typically around 24 weeks of pregnancy, when the fetus can survive outside the womb. Many Democrats have also said they support abortions past this point if the treating physician deems it necessary.

Medical experts say situations resulting in fetal death in the third trimester are rare — fewer than 1% of abortions in the U.S. occur after 21 weeks — and typically involve fatal fetal anomalies or life-threatening emergencies affecting the pregnant person. For fetuses with very short life expectancies, doctors may induce labor and offer palliative care. Some families choose this option when facing diagnoses that limit their babies' survival to minutes or days after delivery.

Some Republicans who have made claims similar to Trump's point to Democratic support of the [Women's Health Protection Act of 2022](#), which would have prohibited many state government restrictions on access to abortion, citing the bill's provisions that say providers and patients have the right to perform and receive abortion services without certain limitations or requirements that would impede access. Anti-abortion advocates say the bill, which failed in the Senate by a 49-51 vote, would have created a loophole that eliminated any limits on abortions later in pregnancy.

Alina Salganicoff, director of KFF's Women's Health Policy program, said the legislation would have allowed health providers to perform abortions without obstacles such as waiting periods, medically unnecessary tests and in-person visits, or other restrictions. The bill would have allowed an abortion after viability when, according to the bill, "in the good-faith medical judgment of the treating health care provider, continuation of the pregnancy would pose a risk to the pregnant patient's life or health."

Trump: "Social Security, he's destroying it, because millions of people are pouring into our country, and they're putting them onto Social Security. They're putting them onto Medicare, Medicaid."

False. It's [wrong to say](#) that immigration will destroy Social Security. Social Security's fiscal challenges stem from a shortage of workers compared with beneficiaries.

Immigration is far from a fiscal fix-all for Social Security's challenges. But having more immigrants in the United States would likely increase the worker-to-beneficiary ratio, potentially for decades, thus extending the program's solvency.

Most immigrants in the U.S. without legal permission are also [ineligible for Social Security](#). However, people who entered the U.S. without authorization and were granted humanitarian parole — temporary permission to stay in the country — for more than one year are eligible for benefits from the program.

Immigrants lacking legal residency in the U.S. are generally [ineligible to enroll](#) in federally funded health care coverage such as Medicare and Medicaid. (Some [states provide](#) Medicaid coverage under [state-funded programs](#) regardless of immigration status. Immigrants are eligible for [emergency Medicaid](#) regardless of their legal status.)

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