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Megyn Kelly but No Donald Trump at Fox News Forum

By [Jennifer Harper](#) - *The Washington Times* - Monday, February 22, 2016

It is a very high-profile dress rehearsal. Just 24 hours before the 10th Republican presidential debate in Houston, Fox News host **Megyn Kelly** will conduct a two-hour voter summit titled “The Kelly File: Face to Face with Candidates.” And most of them are more than willing to comply, save one. On hand for the prime-time event: **Ben Carson**, Sen. [Ted Cruz](#), Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) and Gov. **John Kasich**. No front-runner, though. [Donald Trump](#) will attend a candidate forum at Regent University in Virginia instead. The show must go on, though.

“The Kelly File anchor will engage with the candidates individually on stage and ask them about their policies and where their campaigns stand after Tuesday night’s Nevada caucus and ahead of Super Tuesday,” the network advises. “This special event will also feature an interactive audience of Texas voters who will be able to pose questions to the candidates.”

“You know, he’s very good. It’s clear that he has an exceptionally good understanding of how the economy affects our foreign policy. He understands what’s happening with China, how they could stop North Korea in a heartbeat. This idea that he’s only familiar with slogans, it’s not accurate at all.”

— Former New York Mayor **Rudy Giuliani** on GOP front-runner [Donald Trump](#), to *The Washington Post*. Mr. Giuliani has strategized with the candidate three times in February alone, and now is part of an informal “kitchen cabinet” of [Trump](#) advisers who include former Reagan administration stalwart and talk radio host **Bill Bennett**, Heritage Foundation chief economist **Stephen Moore**, who writes a regular column in this paper’s Commentary section, and uber-economist **Art Laffer**.

As mentioned previously, the tenth Republican debate looms Thursday — hosted by CNN and Telemundo, moderated by **Wolf Blitzer** and staged at the University of Houston in Texas. But there are complaints. Some say entertainment outweighs policy information: **Robert Rosenkranz** — founder of Intelligence Squared U.S., an organization that has staged 117 public policy debates — counsels that things must change.

“Prime-time presidential debates were a brilliant innovation of the 1960s, meant to inform voters and let them see the candidates in action. Their format, however, is due for an update,” Mr. Rosenkranz wrote in a Wall Street Journal op-ed Monday, with co-author **John Donovan**, former White House correspondent for ABC News. “These debates tell voters almost nothing that can’t be gathered from 30-second campaign ads. There is no time for depth, no payoff for nuance, no serious discussion of policy.”

The two urge the Commission on Presidential Debates to adopt an “Oxford-style” debate — no trick questions, no memorized talking points “disguised as answers,” and candidates who actually debate each other. They also cite the sterling example set by the seven Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858 which cast challenger **Abraham Lincoln** against incumbent **Stephen A. Douglas** for the U.S. Senate seat in Illinois.

“We need a format that is more Lincoln-Douglas, less reality TV,” explain Mssrs. Rosenkranz and Donovan.

COULD BE HELPFUL

Plenty of Americans fret over unrest in Syria. But they are also wary of the toll on troops and treasure should the U.S. go it alone there, boots on the ground, with the meter running. Has there been progress coordinating a larger coalition to right the situation? Maybe. **President Obama** had a phone conversation with Russian President **Vladimir Putin** on Monday “to discuss efforts to establish a nationwide cessation of hostilities between the Syrian regime and its allies on the one hand and the armed opposition on the other,” according to an excruciatingly formal White House dispatch.

“President Obama welcomed that an understanding was reached between the United States, Russia, as well as other partners in the International Syria Support Group on the terms and modalities for such a cessation of hostilities. President Obama emphasized that the priority now was to ensure positive responses by the Syrian regime and armed opposition as well as faithful implementation by all parties in order to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, galvanize UN-led political process, and focus on defeating ISIL,” the description noted.

ONE FOR BIG MOUNTAIN JESUS

“A beloved World War II memorial, dubbed **Big Mountain Jesus** by locals, will remain standing on a popular Montana ski slope,” declares the Becket Fund, a nonprofit, public interest law firm. Championed by the Knights of Columbus, the 60-year-old statue honors soldiers who fought against the Nazis in the Alps of Italy. The Becket Fund defended the memorial in a five-year battle against The Freedom From Religion Foundation, a Wisconsin-based group that demanded the statue’s removal, claiming that its mere presence violated the First Amendment. And here’s what happened: The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals protected the memorial in recent months, but the deadline for asking the nation’s highest court to remove it passed on Thursday — with no comment from the opposing group.

“The statue now stands as a reminder that government cannot rewrite history or censor culture to strip the religious elements. The First Amendment prohibits religious coercion, not religious culture,”

says **Eric Baxter**, lead attorney in the case. “Of course militant atheists have rights, but not the right to dictate history and culture for everyone else.”