

Dear Editor:

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, Centre College in Danville, Kentucky will host a vice-presidential debate. The Commission for Presidential Debates (CPD; [www.debates.org](http://www.debates.org)) is organizing this debate, and the presidential debates in Boston, Winston-Salem, and St. Louis. Currently, only the Democratic and Republican candidates have been invited to participate.

The members of the Coalition for Opening the Debates believe that all Americans, and the democratic process, would benefit from debates that are open to all political parties. Over 47,000 people have signed an on-line ballot at [Vote.com](http://Vote.com), 71% of which seek open debates. According to a Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll representative of all registered voters, 64% say Green Party candidate Ralph Nader and Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan should be in the debates. There are five major third parties that offer a great deal of choice to voters: the Constitution/U.S. Taxpayers Party, the Green Party, the Natural Law Party, the Libertarian Party, and the Reform Party. This is not a complete list of all third parties that are developing and expanding. As expected, all of these parties have platforms that encourage and advance a multiparty system with educated debates among all candidates.

The Coalition for Opening the Debates is organizing a non-violent protest that will take place directly before and throughout the debate. We are organizing this event as an expression of our First Amendment right to free speech. Any injury or property damage resulting from protest activities will not be promoted or supported by the COD, and will be seen as an attempt to violate our First Amendment rights. In the wake of violence in Seattle, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, we want to do everything we can to prevent such negative events from occurring in Danville. Violence will only detract from the purpose of our protest. Protesters organized under the Coalition for Opening the Debates will be wearing gags to signify the loss of our voices in our current political process. In the protest area, as designated by the debate organizers, various members among the protesting organizations will give short speeches. Winona LaDuke, the Green Party vice-presidential candidate, and possibly several vice-presidential candidates from other third parties will also give speeches if they are not allowed to participate in the CPD debate.

We welcome any citizen who has questions about the protest or the debate to contact and join us; we are most easily contacted via our website, [www.openthedeates.org](http://www.openthedeates.org). Please use this opportunity to educate yourselves about the political process as it exists today, and recognize that you do have other choices for political offices. All political parties, major and minor, have websites that present their candidates and explain their platforms. Local libraries are also a good source of information on party and platform information. With freedom comes the civic responsibility of all Americans to ensure that their governing bodies serve the best interest of the people. Neither our Constitution nor its Amendments state that only two political parties shall serve the good of the people.

Sincerely,

The Coalition for Opening the Debates  
[www.openthedeates.org](http://www.openthedeates.org)