

"Liveblogging" the "town hall"

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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*My real-time notes on the presidential debate last night, followed by some cleanup and linking this morning. I listened to much of it on the radio instead of watching. It's nice. You don't have to see the candidates' forced smiles and condescending smirks.*

See also my notes on the [first debate](#) and the [VP debate](#).

Crowley: My goal is to "ensure questions get answered." Translation: I'll be like Raddatz, not Lehrer, even though this is a "town hall" in the great New England tradition of ordinary citizens gathering in the center of the community to read pre-selected questions to national candidates for the benefit of TV viewers.

Our first question is about jobs for college graduates. Not that they're suffering unemployment at anything like the rate people with less education are, but they do vote more.

Romney's right about Pell grants (contra his running mate's detailed proposal to cut them), student loans and the main thing being available jobs. But how will he create these jobs? "I know how" isn't an answer.

Obama: Manufacturing jobs! *Manufacturing jobs!* For college graduates.

Romney gives a good, concise explanation of how the distance between him and the president on the auto rescue was not exactly night and day.

Obama: Romney "has a one-point plan." Think the president's gotten the message that he was too passive last time?

Obama gives a punchy, 20-word summation of the massive problem that is private equity and leveraged buyouts.

It's difficult to argue for tons of daylight between the parties on support for the fossil-fuel status quo (unlike on green energy itself). Would that it were so.

Obama: We can go after new natural gas in an environmentally sound way. No, not really--it's at best an environmental better-than.

Obama mocks Romney for once saying that a coal plant kills. Of course, coal plants *do* kill. It's depressing to see them fight over the title "Mr. Coal."

Mr. Gas! New cat nickname.

Obama: Romney could bring gas prices down--by putting us in another economic mess! The econo-wonks say "zing!"; everyone else says "huh?"

Romney steps all over Crowley to make sure we know that he appreciates jobs. Noted.

Romney: From my time in the private sector, I know that job losses are caused by people I'll later run for office against in the public sector.

Obama: When the governor was an investor, he wouldn't have voted for an investment idea that wouldn't say how it would pay for itself until after everybody votes for their favorite investment idea in the investment-idea election.

Romney: Of course my tax plan adds up, because I balanced budgets in situations totally different from this where, unlike the federal government, I didn't have a choice.

Romney: I forgot what the question was, but I know how to make a strong economy and I'm not telling. What's the point of a secret if you go blabbing it to everyone?

Obama nicely pivots: women's issues=family issues=economic issues. And he's right.

Obama: I'm afraid that my daughters won't have opportunities when they grow up. Employers will be like, sure, your dad was president, but why aren't you a *boy*?

Romney: How am I different from Bush? I'll make trade deals in Latin America. Like Obama did.

Romney: Our party has been focused on big business for too long. How do you think I got the nomination?

Guy: How will you make my life better, Mr. President? Obama: I've already done great things for lots of people who aren't you! Romney: And how have they helped *you*, guy? Romney's point.

Romney: "Get a Green Card; staple it to their diplomas; come to the U.S. of A." Nice line.

Obama: I look forward to answering that question. Oh, right now?

It's official: both candidates have given up on getting this Latina voter's name right.

Obama: Romney is anti-access! To *anything*! He would close every beach. He would federally mandate that all churches baptize and commune only the clergy. He would password-protect every website in the world and change the passwords hourly.

Romney says "illegals." Whether you prefer "undocumented" or "illegal," couldn't we at least agree that the latter makes a better adjective than a noun when talking about human beings?

Guy: My colleagues and I used a brain trust to come up with the same question about the Benghazi incident that everyone's been asking for the last couple weeks.

Obama: I was too busy *being president* to snipe with Romney over the Benghazi response in the immediate aftermath.

Obama has not answered guy's question. Is he saying he doesn't know whose call it was to deny the diplomats extra security?

Romney: The administration's failure to prevent the Benghazi incident shows how the president's entire Middle East policy is a failure. I think that point somehow speaks for itself, so now I'll just name a bunch of other countries in the Middle East.

Romney: "Am I incorrect in that regard?" Crowley: Well, yes.

Obama: Loose gun-control laws are not the only cause of gun violence in the U.S. He mentions Chicago's [epidemic of gun violence](#). Remember when Michael Moore used to make [complex and not entirely polemical movies](#)?

Romney: Automatic weapons are illegal in this country. Um, no they aren't.

Romney: Marriage reduces poverty. Nope, [that's backwards](#). But he's right that marriage is good for society. Which is one reason gay people should have access to it, too.

Romney: How about that Fast and Furious thing? Got nothing to do with domestic gun violence, but who cares?

Romney: It was great that people came together to pass gun-control legislation. I want more of that. About other things obviously, not guns, since I just said I want no new laws restricting guns.

Obama: Romney and I agree about schools. Yes, unfortunately they generally do.

Obama: We support math and science in schools! Here's what we've said to kids who are interested in history, literature, art or music: sorry, kid. Also: do well on all of these standardized math tests or else we'll fire your teacher.

Obama the systemic-cause-focused community organizer comes off here as Obama the guy who wants to change the subject. Guns and schools? Totally unrelated!

Romney: Obama will do more to make people want to go overseas with their jobs. And it goes without saying that they should be allowed to do whatever they want and even rewarded for it, so what can you do?

Romney: "Government does not create jobs." Elect me to lead the government, and you too can have a non-job.

Obama: The GI Bill advanced the entire country--it wasn't just a handout. I wish we could have a whole 90-minute debate on this subject.