
★ ★ ★ *The Idaho* DEBATES ★ ★ ★

APRIL 18 LT GOVERNOR DEBATE CANCELED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Betsy Russell, (208) 336-2854

BOISE – State Rep. Priscilla Giddings has backed out of her statewide debate Monday against House Speaker Scott Bedke in the race between the two this year for Idaho lieutenant governor, saying she didn't want to answer questions from reporters on a panel because she believed they would be biased.

The Idaho Debates are a three-decade-plus institution in Idaho, featuring debates from active candidates for state offices in primary and general elections. They are a collaboration between the Idaho Press Club, which selects the reporter panelists; Idaho Public Television, which provides the moderator and broadcasts the debates live statewide on its network as well as online; the League of Women Voters of Idaho; and Idaho's public universities.

Giddings had previously committed to take part in the debate, as had Bedke. This past Monday, her campaign spokesman told Idaho Public Television in an email, "We are preparing for the debate and will have the guest list for you this week." However, the campaign also demanded to know who the reporters on the panel would be, saying, "We require that panelists be approved beforehand."

That has never been permitted, for any candidate. "The Idaho Debates partners don't reveal reporters on the panel to any candidate in advance," said Melissa Davlin of Idaho Public Television, the scheduled moderator for the debate. "This is so campaigns can't pick and choose who asks questions of them. We tried to work with the Giddings campaign within the parameters of our rules."

In an email today to Davlin, campaign spokesman Zach Lautenschlager wrote, "The decision to withhold the names of the panelists on the false pretense that this will suddenly make them fair and respectful leaves us with very little choice. ... We are forced to refuse the invitation."

Davlin said the Idaho Debates cannot hold debates without at least two candidates.

"It's unfortunate that we have to cancel the debate, as I know viewers across the state were excited to see the two candidates make their case to voters," she said.

Currently scheduled Idaho Debates include the GOP candidates for Idaho attorney general on Tuesday; those for state superintendent of public instruction on April 25; and those for Idaho secretary of state on Aug. 26. Plans for a debate in the governor's race still are pending.

All debates will air live at 8 pm MT/7 pm PT on Idaho Public Television. For more information, visit idahoptv.org/idahodebates.