

## IQ Squared: A better way to debate

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With the debate moderators announced and the dates set, America awaits this year's three presidential and one vice presidential debates.

Robert Rosenkranz thinks there's a better way. His "Intelligence Squared U.S." program was founded in 2006 and can be heard on 220 National Public Radio stations, on public television's digital channel WORLD and via an online stream at Fora.TV.

The upcoming season, which kicks off Sept. 12 at New York's Kaufman Center, will feature Robert Reich, Glenn Hubbard, Dinesh D'Souza and Michael Shermer. The show has previously featured such notables as Paul Krugman, Karl Rove and Michael Chertoff.

"I think the presidential debates are not debates — they're speeches," Rosenkranz told POLITICO. "They're not interested in listening to what the other guy says or engaging in a real discourse that might change people's minds. They're interested in simply trying to stick to a script, get the soundbites, not make blunders that are really going to hurt them and come across as, at least in Romney's case, plausibly presidential. They're not anxious to engage in substance any more than they feel they absolutely need to."

Rosenkranz says he hopes his own debate series does a better job ... even if the presidential candidate won't be there.

"What we've learned is this idea of the debaters and the moderator *listening*," said Dana Wolfe, who produces the debates series. "What we've been proud of is that we've gotten people to engage with one another and listen and also having a moderator that is so well prepared and who listens to each side and who can go back to them and push them in a way. When you're doing a presidential debate, there's only so much time you have and you know you're under the gun."

Rosenkranz says the devolution of presidential debates is, in part, purposeful.

"I suspect they've made a rational political calculation that, with anything to do with that kind of detail, that's substantive, it's pretty easy to demagogue against," he said. "The Middle East is pretty difficult. Do you want to be in favor of Islamists? Or dictators as politicians? You just don't want to go there. But that is, in fact, the choice."

*CORRECTION: A previous version of this story misspelled Dana Wolfe's name.*