



Suzanne Lee
5512 S First Apache Rd., Ste. 110
Las Vegas, NV 89148

Dear Ms. Lee,

In response to your debate request...

You propose two televised debates, up to 60 minutes long, to be held between October 1 and October 19 and moderated by someone in the media.

The problem with this format is that it strictly limits the amount of time available to respond to questions related to often complex issues and problems. I believe voters deserve better than that.

And with that in mind, I found it interesting that in a recent tweet you wrote: “Isn’t it time we have a real conversation, Danny?”

I agree and I accept. But a “conversation” is different from a “debate.”

In a conversation people talk to each other. There’s give-and-take. There’s back-and-forth. There’s no referee. And there’s no time clock. People talk about a topic for as long as and as deep as they choose before moving on to something else.

Indeed, I believe a series of 90-minute public conversations between you and I, one-on-one, would be extremely beneficial to the voters of CD-03. So let’s do it. The more conversations the better.

Your initial proposal calls for only two televised “debates” and only between October 1 and October 19, “when voters are most engaged with the campaign but before early voting begins.”

As you know, most voters tend to start paying attention to the general election right after Labor Day. So there’s no sense in waiting a full month until October. Let’s start the week of September 3rd.

Also, as campaigns tend to really heat up during early voting, I propose we continue to have public conversations during both weeks of early voting leading up to Election Day.

And rather than have these conversations in a sanitized TV studio where participation by the voters themselves is strictly limited, I propose we hold our get-togethers in public forums around the district – such as at UNLV, community colleges, high school auditoriums, public libraries, etc.

If we want to represent the citizens of CD-03 in Washington, DC, they deserve to see and hear us up-close and in person, not just on a TV screen. Don't you agree?

Now, as for your proposal to have our discussions "moderated by qualified journalists with experience moderating general election debates in Nevada," allow me to make an alternative suggestion...

The candidates in this race are you and me. By handing control of the conversation as to what issues are discussed to a member of the media, the moderator becomes a participant in our campaign rather than an observer and reporter.

Such questioning is fine for a press conference, but has often proved counter-productive and controversial in debates. As such, I propose we discard this out-dated formula.

Instead of a current journalist controlling our conversation, I propose we use a "mediator" – more like a judge than trial attorney.

The mediator can be a former journalist – such as Mitch Fox. But using someone currently active in reporting the news is too much of a temptation for him or her to try to "be" the news with the selection of their questions.

The same conflict occurs when one news outlet – such as a television network – is selected to host the conversation to the exclusion all others. This also results in the network promoting the discussion more like a prize fight than a public policy conversation for ratings purposes.

This sort of thing has often helped contribute to the uncivil nature of today's campaigns.

Instead, I propose the hosts of our conversations be mutually-agreed upon public policy institutions and allow any and all television or other networks to cover them and/or broadcast them – including live-streaming over the Internet.

Yesterday, we both affirmed our support for town halls. These discussions provide opportunities for public involvement right now. Since having "a real conversation" was your idea, I hope you'll agree to do it. Standing by waiting for your acceptance...

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny Tarkanian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Danny Tarkanian