

As Trump and Clinton squabble, campaigns crumble and rumors fly

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The recent firing of Donald Trump's campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, and the report of his empty coffers came to signal the blood in the water, beginning a new battle between Trump and Hillary.

The two presumptive party nominees have been trading barbs throughout this week, coming to a head Wednesday. Hillary Clinton gave a speech Tuesday night, attacking Trump on his business methods and the shortcomings of his policy proposals while Trump live tweeted his rebuttals and gave his own speech Wednesday morning, focusing on Clinton's checkered past with donors and various corruption allegations.

Clinton addressed Trump's various business ventures, stating "Trump has written a lot of books about business- but they all seem to end at chapter 11," in reference to term for chapter 11 bankruptcy filing as a method for reorganizing a troubled business. The Democratic candidate went on to place numerous lines of attack on the Republican candidate, also claiming his tax plan would contribute significantly to the national debt if left allowed over the next couple decades. Trump's response cut to the personal, taking familiar aim at Clinton's email scandals as well as the convoluted business practices of the Clinton Foundation in accepting secretive funds for back-channel deals. Trump made note of Clinton garnering sweeping fees for offering speeches, at an average rate close to \$200,000 per speech. Trump also referenced Bill Clinton's acceptance of a \$750,000 for a speech on behalf of Ericsson Telecom, as a shady deal to protect the company from facing sanctions against their business practices in Iran.

Various sources, ranging from CNN to NBC to the Washington Post have gone to work fact-checking the speeches offered by both candidates and poking a variety of holes in the broad spectrum of claims between the two. The sources have assigned partial truth to a number of the negative claims and noted in one claim made by Trump that Clinton is guilty of offshore accounts as a both truthful and hypocritical claim as Trump has a history with that problem as well.

So here's the question: what if it's all true? Assuming the best, that the latest fact-checks offer the last verdict on the truthfulness of either candidate's claim, then both candidates emerge from their fight this week with damaged reputations and a broadened credibility gap. Assuming the worst, that the claims either candidates have made are well researched and strongly founded arguments, America is faced with the prospect of its two biggest presidential candidates being shady politicians and businessmen with poor records and worse plans for the future. Between the two of them are repeated claims of fraud, quid pro quo political exchanges, profiteering from political position, bankrupting business practices and questionable connections with corporate interests, to name just some of the recent accusations.

At what point does the electorate demand to pump the brakes on this political pageantry? Obviously, with the electoral cycle in place, we can't all press pause and come back to the issue later. The November election will be here sooner than we think, but the right questions are not being asked. If this was any other decision it might be approached with a level of caution, if not an outright demand for a different set of candidates. If this was a company board meeting to select the next CEO, and these were the candidates, the board would elect someone else entirely. If this was one of those online competitions to choose the next Lay's chips flavor and the only choices were Orange Juice and Toothpaste or Onion and Banana, nobody would choose either option. More hesitation and care is afforded there than to our presidency. So it's just the luck of the system we have in place that we're only deciding over the next "leader of the free world" for the coming four years. With the death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, this election cycle could tip the balance on Supreme Court rulings for decades to come. At stake is the future of our foreign policy, in a time where Middle Eastern regional stability is precarious. At stake is the future of our growing national debt, which hovers right under \$20 trillion.

It seems a sad thing that we are offered the prospect of these two candidates, when our country faces the issues it does. If these were the best candidates to rise to the top of our leading political parties, when our country is facing some of its biggest challenges in decades, we really need to reevaluate how we stand up for

our politicians. They, being Trump and Clinton and the parties they both come from, need to step it up and get themselves in line and start working on improving their proposals. We, as the people that may well put one of them in the seat of the presidency, need to ask more from them than what they have given us thus far. The hardcore fans of either candidate will not be swayed, but theirs are not the votes that matter most either. To the casual fans of either and the voters in the middle that are still waiting to be won over, just remember that you don't owe your vote to either of them. Out of the given accusations and problematic proposals for solutions to our country's problems, only by holding back and demanding more can we expect to see them try harder and do better than they have thus far.

As it stands, neither candidate has gained a clear advantage in the wind-up to the general election. They need to win support, which leaves the electorate with something of a bargaining chip to bring them under control. So long as rabid support isn't automatically given, we might be able see them improve their positions. Trump's insistence on being the larger than life candidate might be curbed into the making of a reasonable conservative candidate, and Clinton's ability to win over corporate donors and the average working liberal might be challenged, leaving her with the prospect of winning favor outside the monolithic support she has so far received from the Democratic Party.

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