



National Journal



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TAMPA BAY, Fla – *The St. Petersburg Times, NBC News, National Journal and the Florida Council of 100 announced today that they will co-sponsor a Republican presidential primary debate early next year. It will be held at the St. Pete Times Forum in Tampa, site of the 2012 Republican National Convention.*

It is the first time that presidential primary candidates will debate in the arena where one of them will return to accept the nomination.

This is expected to be the first major debate following the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire and South Carolina primaries. It will be broadcast nationally, underscoring the critical importance of Florida in the 2012 election. The state has played a decisive role in recent primary and general election campaigns.

“Florida will be at the center of next year’s presidential election, and this is the state where national issues like the economy and health care loom especially large,” said Paul Tash, Times Chairman and CEO. “Our debate will be a telling preview of the presidential campaign and the Republican convention, right back here at the St. Pete Times Forum.”

The Times, the largest newspaper in the Southeast, has sponsored debates for national, state and local offices since 1994. In 1998, the Times and NBC News produced back-to-back debates for the U.S. Senate and Florida governor, moderated by the late Meet the Press host Tim Russert.

NBC News has been a leading source of global news and information for more than 75 years, first on radio, and today via broadcast and cable television, the Internet, radio and cell phones. Operating around the clock with bureaus in key cities in the U.S. and overseas, NBC News provides immediate coverage and in-depth reporting of major events to a worldwide audience.

“Florida has played a pivotal role in every presidential election of the past century and could very well be the stage for history again in 2012,” said Steve Capus, President of NBC News. “Each partner in this debate brings a unique set of tools and expertise that will all combine to present a substantive and stimulating dialogue to the voters of the state and the whole country.”

The Florida Council of 100, the first of its kind in the United States, is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of key Florida business and civic leaders.

“The 2012 election will be a turning point for our state and nation,” said Council Chair Steven Halverson. “Floridians’ economic well-being and quality of life are at stake, and the Council is privileged to play a part in the discussion of vital issues that we ourselves have been addressing for the past 50 years.”

National Journal is co-sponsoring its first-ever debate, said Ron Fournier, National Journal’s editor-in-chief, “because we believe there are few missions more important in journalism than helping Americans choose their leaders. Like its media partners NBC News and the St. Petersburg Times, National Journal is committed to making this an important debate about the politics and policy that may change the course of this country.”

National Journal is a respected, Washington D.C.-based digital and print news organization with a well-established reputation for non-partisan reporting and analysis. It is considered to be a premier source for 360-degree insight on politics and policy in the nation’s capital.