



To: Interested Parties
From: Jason Green-Lowe, Executive Director - Center for AI Policy
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RE: Thursday's debate and "scary AI?"

Agreeing that AI is scary

If there's one thing this year's Presidential candidates agree on, artificial intelligence is scary.

As Donald Trump put it in a February 2024 [interview](#) with Fox Business, "And the other thing that I think is maybe the most dangerous thing out there of anything, because there's no real solution — the AI, as they call it. It is so scary...something has to be done about this, and it has to be done fast."

Or, as Trump reiterated in a [podcast](#) with Logan Paul last week, "It is very disconcerting. I said, you know, you use the word alarming: it is alarming! When I saw a picture of me promoting a product, and I could not tell — the voice was perfect, the lips moved perfectly with every word, the way you couldn't...if you were a lip reader, you'd say it's absolutely perfect and that's scary."

Trump went on to point out that a truly convincing deepfake could easily lead to nuclear war. As he argued, if a video shows a President announcing a nuclear strike, then the victim of that strike might have no way to figure out whether the video is authentic in the 12 minutes or so that it takes missiles to land. With the clock ticking, a nervous foreign government might order a real nuclear counterattack in retaliation for a fake video, killing millions of people.

Similarly, Joe Biden has long held that AI is the greatest challenge we have ever faced.

As Biden put it during a [joint press conference](#) with the UK Prime Minister in June 2023, "I don't think ever in the history of human endeavor has there been as fundamental potential technological change as is presented by artificial intelligence. It is staggering. It is staggering."

Even current Biden White House staffers are concerned with this new technology. “He was as impressed and alarmed as anyone,” Deputy White House Chief of Staff Bruce Reed said in an October 2023 [interview](#) with Time magazine. “He saw fake AI images of himself, of his dog. He saw how it can make bad poetry. And he’s seen and heard the incredible and terrifying technology of voice cloning, which can take three seconds of your voice and turn it into an entire fake conversation.”

These concerns seem to have stuck with Biden: earlier this month, the Biden Justice Department blocked the release of Biden’s interview with a special counsel. According to the [Yakima Herald-Republic](#), the Biden Administration worried that releasing the real audio “could spur deepfakes and disinformation that trick Americans,” essentially conceding that “the U.S. government could not stop the misuse of artificial intelligence ahead of this year’s election.”

So, what do they plan to do about AI?

What’s less clear is what, if anything, either Presidential candidate would do to curb these dangers after winning an election.

“Biden hasn’t formally released his plans as part of his campaign,” notes the [Associated Press](#), and it’s not clear what AI-related policies he would push for beyond more “public funding for the domestic computer chip industry.”

As the Center for AI Policy pointed out in an opinion editorial for [The Hill](#), Biden’s State of the Union address mentioned AI only once.

Biden called for a ban on voice impersonation, but didn’t say how or when he would ban the technology, nor has he endorsed any of the [several bills](#) circulating in Congress that would impose such a ban.

Biden’s [executive order](#) on AI did mobilize the various federal agencies to start drafting policies on how they will cope with AI, and the agencies have dutifully been cranking out [reports](#) and [requests for comment](#) ever since. Unfortunately, most of these policies are internal to the federal government—very few of them restrict reckless AI development by private companies.

Similarly, the Trump campaign has said almost nothing about what it would do to protect Americans against AI. The [Associated Press](#) has cataloged nine of Trump’s policy priorities, but none of these priorities even mention AI.

AI demands Presidential leadership

The Center for AI Policy (CAIP) believes that the 2024 Presidential candidates need to take a stand.

If Biden and Trump believe AI is as dangerous as they say it is, then the American public deserves to hear their plans for protecting America against these dangers. When you're the President, you can't just call something "so scary" or "staggering" and then hope that someone else will deal with it – dealing with threats to national security is very much the top assignment of the Oval Office job.

Thursday's debate hosted by CNN is a wonderful opportunity for Biden and Trump to go on record and tell the public what they plan to do about AI.

In concrete terms, how will each candidate respond to this "scary" technology?

CAIP is hopeful that Dana Bash or Jake Tapper will ask the candidates, "If a strong AI safety bill like [CAIP's model legislation](#) reaches your desk, will you sign it?"

CAIP will be watching to find out.