

Good move

by The San Diego Union-Tribune

It was a mistake by Republican presidential candidates that gave Democrats the chance to portray them as indifferent to Hispanic concerns. Now that mistake has been corrected, and it is Republicans who have been given the opportunity to speak directly to the nation's largest minority.

First, the background. Earlier this year, Univision, America's largest Spanish-language television network, scheduled a pair of presidential debates. With the help of translators, candidates would answer questions posed to them in Spanish. It was innovative and historic.

The Democratic debate went off without a hitch, but the Republican one, originally scheduled for Sept. 16, had to be postponed. You could say there was a lack of interest on the part of the candidates, since only John McCain agreed to attend. The other hopefuls took their share of criticism from the media, voters and even GOP officials for ducking out on the forum.

Now, the Republican presidential candidates are getting a "do-over" since the debate has been rescheduled for Dec. 9 at the University of Miami. The top four candidates - Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, Fred Thompson and McCain - have confirmed their attendance. Others are likely to follow. And this event might finally come together.

This is good to hear. Republicans should not concede the Hispanic vote to Democrats, especially since so many of the party's values seem to resonate with those voters. If Democrats want that support, they should roll up their sleeves and earn it. They should not simply inherit it by default. Meanwhile, Republicans running for president have a compelling case to make on other issues - trade, education, national defense, economic prosperity - to this increasingly influential group of voters.

Let's hear it.

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