

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Intelligence Squared U.S. Audience Agrees that “When It Comes to Politics, The Internet is Closing Our Minds”**

**Eli Pariser and Siva Vaidhyanathan Win Debate over Evgeny Morozov and Jacob Weisberg**

**Debate will air on NPR stations nationwide and be telecast on WNET/Thirteen on May 26<sup>th</sup> at 3 PM**

NEW YORK – April 18, 2012 – Last night, Intelligence Squared U.S. continued its spring 2012 season with a victory for the motion “When it Comes to Politics, The Internet is Closing Our Minds.” In the final tally, Eli Pariser and Siva Vaidhyanathan won the Oxford-style debate by convincing 25% of the audience to change their minds and oppose the motion. After the debate, 53% of audience members agreed that the Internet is not helping Americans to see beyond the views they already hold about politics, up from 28% pre-debate (see full numbers below).

**Watch the full debate streaming at Fora.tv here:**

[http://fora.tv/live/intelligencesquared\\_us/internet](http://fora.tv/live/intelligencesquared_us/internet)

Opposing the motion, Evgeny Morozov and Jacob Weisberg sought to prove that our online connections are, in fact, exposing us to a wider variety of viewpoints than ever before. But at the end of the evening it was Pariser’s and Vaidhyanathan’s argument that our social networks reinforce our existing opinions and limit our exposure to diversity in American political discourse that convinced the audience to support the motion.

This latest intellectual matchup was IQ2US’s 60th debate and was streamed live on Fora.tv with additional coverage from IQ2US’s media partner, Slate.

ABC News correspondent John Donovan is the moderator, and the executive producer is Dana Wolfe.

**Key Excerpts For the Motion:**

**ELI PARISER:**

“According to a Pew study from 2007, people actually were more informed on foreign policy matters before the internet than in 2007.... What’s relevant is whether people come into daily contact with more different sources and more particular, different ideological ones. ...The regular folk don’t read sites like Global Voices, an aggregator of the most interesting blog posts from all over the world. Instead they are more likely to

use the internet to rediscover their own culture and dare we say it, their own national bigotry. Big companies are rapidly working to personalize your version of the web.”

**SIVA VAIDHYANATHAN:**

“Facebook and Google and Microsoft and Apple all wish to be the operating systems of our lives. They're explicit about this. They don't just want to be on the web because the web is 20 years old, and it's actually kind of creaky. What they want to do is be there with you all the time in your glasses, in your pocket, in your purse and on your mind always. They want to be your personal assistant. There's quote after quote after quote from every CEO of every one of these companies that that's what they want. And it might make things really cool for us. But it's not going to make things rich and diverse. It's not going to be the wonderful conversation that we could have had on the web if we hadn't instigated these gated communities, these operating systems of our lives.”

### **Key Excerpts Against the Motion:**

**EVGENY MOROZOV:**

“The way Google and Facebook map out our social connections, they try to be very comprehensive. We see links from people we went to school with, our colleagues, our relatives, and so forth. It's quite likely that many of these people will have radically different positions on 9/11, climate change, Obama's birthplace, and UFOs. So my point with this is that a link to the report of 9/11 commission that has been endorsed by someone from my social circle, is trustworthier than a generic Google link that has not passed through a similar social filter. In other words, it's a possibility that people would now be paying more attention or at least more respect to positions they would otherwise find crazy and conspiratorial, only because their friends are known to endorse those positions.”

**JACOB WEISBERG:**

“I do think the phenomenon of increased polarization in Congress is pretty clearly documented at this point. That's happening, and I deplore it. I just don't think the Internet has anything to do with it. I think the big drivers of that are redistricting which put people in districts that tend to go one way or the other and fewer that swing back and forth. I think it's fundraising which means politicians spend all their time fundraising and actually don't have human relationships with each other very much. I think hyper partisan media--of which Fox is probably the best example--have some impact on it. But, you know, members of Congress, these are -- if you want to look for a group of people who really aren't on the Internet very much, that's them. I mean, I don't think it's what's driving it.”

### **Before the debate, the IQ2US audience voted as follows:**

- 28% of audience agreed with the resolution
- 37% of audience against the resolution

- 35% undecided

After careful consideration of the points by the audience, Eli Pariser and Siva Vaidhyanathan won the debate: the team that moves the most votes at the end of the evening is determined the winner.

- 53% of audience agreeing with the resolution (+25%)
- 36% of audience against the resolution (-1%)
- 11% undecided (-24%)

To learn more about the debate and review a detailed breakdown of how the audience voted pre- and post-debate, please visit our Facebook page at:  
<http://www.facebook.com/Think2Twice>

The showdown at NYU's Skirball Center in New York City (566 LaGuardia Place) puts the leading public intellectuals in the limelight in front of a live audience for nearly two hours of heated debate.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- To view transcripts and videos, download audio or video clips or learn more about Intelligence Squared U.S., please visit:  
<http://intelligencesquaredus.org/index.php/past-debates/when-it-comes-to-politics-the-internet-is-closing-our-minds/>
- NPR will air the debate on stations nationwide and the podcast will be available to download. Please check with your local NPR stations for additional details or visit:  
<http://www.npr.org/series/6263392/intelligence-squared-u-s>
- WNET/Thirteen will air this debate June 16<sup>th</sup> at 3 PM

#### **ABOUT INTELLIGENCE SQUARED DEBATES (IQ2US)**

**Named One of “Five Podcasts that Will Change the Way You Think” by Forbes:**  
<http://onforb.es/zWuDaI>

Rethink your point of view with Intelligence Squared U.S. (IQ2US), Oxford-style debates live from New York City.

Based on the highly successful debate program based in London, the Intelligence Squared Foundation has presented over 50 debates on a wide range of provocative and timely topics. From global warming and the financial crisis, to Afghanistan/Pakistan and the death of mainstream media, Intelligence Squared brings together the world's leading authorities on the day's most important issues.

Since its inception in 2006, the goals have been to provide a new forum for intelligent discussion, grounded in facts and informed by reasoned analysis; to transcend the toxically emotional and the reflexively ideological; and to encourage recognition that the opposing side has intellectually respectable views.

The Rosenkranz Foundation initiated the Intelligence Squared U.S. Debate Series and continues to provide major support.

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