If we're going to continue bothering with political debates — and by this I mean political candidates are legally allowed to pre-empt “The Simpsons” — I think we deserve a clear winner.

For example, I have long argued that such debates be resolved with hammers. Be honest. Wouldn't you rather have seen Palin and Biden pound out their differences with mallets?

A hammer debate is a win-win for America. Not only would there be a clear winner, but also one less politician. That has to be worth the mess it would make.

Besides, it's not like there's a shortage of potential VP candidates. You could have a VP lottery and pick another one and not do any worse.

A hammer fight does seem a little extreme though. Since it's not likely that such an event would be televised, maybe other forms of debate should be considered.

How about a rat catching contest? It's a bit hard to argue over the exact number of caught rats. And vermin handling is probably a valuable executive office skill.

A VP belly flop contest would be nice. You might have to handicap it. Some bellies are bigger than others. The main goal would be to hold it from such a height that it wouldn't take many flops before it was definitely over.

Chess, drag racing, darts, pie throwing, spelling — there are better ways to evaluate vice presidential candidates than the kind that leave America wondering who actually won.

I got a feeling we're going to be doing plenty of that during the next four years anyway.

rkirby@sitrib.com