

LEAGUE CANDIDATE FORUMS AND DEBATES

AND BEST PRACTICES

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In carrying out our mission of encouraging informed and active participation in government, the League of Women Voters continues to be key sponsors of candidate debates and forums.

LWVIL provides information about Candidate Forums and Debates on the LWVIL.org website under Member Resources, Resources for Leaders, General Board Policies and Voter Service – http://www.lwvil.org/resources_voterservice.asp

More detailed information to assist Leagues in their efforts to organize debates can be found in the League publication FAQ'S: LEAGUE CANDIDATE FORUMS AND DEBATES, found on the LWVUS Web site (www.lwv.org). This FAQ should not be construed as legal advice. State and local Leagues should consult their own tax and election law counsel to ensure that their debate plans are in accord with all applicable laws and regulations.

Finally, the public holds the League in high regard for our work on debates, so it is important to follow best practices to ensure a fair and well executed debate or forum. This respected tradition also offers state and local Leagues wonderful opportunities to be visible with the public and to help strengthen the organization through inviting new members to join and developing new leaders. Information to assist Leagues in these areas is also found on the LWVUS Web site in the Members Resources under Voters Service - <http://www.lwv.org/content/faqs-candidate-forums-debates>.

The following Best Practices are based on those adopted by the LWVUS with additions made by the LWVIL.

BEST PRACTICES

The following represent a short check list of best practices League should follow when hosting or sponsoring a candidate debate or forum.

- ✓ **Annually review and adopt your League's criteria for candidate participation in debates/forums.** Do this well in advance of when you intend to invite candidates to participate, so there can be NO charge of setting criteria that could be construed to purposely include or exclude any candidate.
- ✓ **Designate someone in your League (on board or off board) to be the debate manager.** No matter how large or small the debate project, it is important for someone to be in charge and to communicate with the board on various logistics.
- ✓ **Know the federal, state and local laws** that govern or have an impact on holding a debate or forum! Contact LWVIL staff for information or clarification.
- ✓ In case it is needed before, during or after your debates, consider **procuring a law firm or lawyer who can offer pro-bono legal advice.**
- ✓ **Make sure you are maximizing visibility and organizational growth opportunities** (new leadership development, membership recruitment, etc.) affiliated with conducting candidate debates or forums.
- ✓ **Know where to find additional information.** Use these resources:
 - **LWVIL STAFF**
 - **LWVIL Web site (www.lwvil.org)** under Member Resources
 - Voter Service
 - **LWVUS Web site (www.lwv.org)**
 - *Face to Face: A Guide to League Sponsored Debates*
 - *League Basics*
 - Tools for Leaders
 - Leaders' Updates, search by key words
- ✓ **Remember that league is political, but non-partisan.** To ensure that the League's voice is heard over the tumult of party politics, and to maintain the credibility of the League, review the non-partisan policy of not supporting any political party or candidate.