

LWVILEF GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING CANDIDATE FORUMS/DEBATES

- Take the lead in planning candidate forums. The League is viewed as the “expert” and most organizations welcome this arrangement.
- Work with co-sponsors who are also nonpartisan and do not endorse candidates. This carries over to newspapers that endorse candidates. If the endorsement will precede your forum, the newspaper should not be a co-sponsor.
- Select your moderator early and invite that person to be involved in the planning. Trade moderators with a neighboring League to avoid any appearance of bias or partisanship.
- Choose a format that will help voters make an electoral decision and put the candidates on record so they can be held accountable.
- Have candidate criteria for participation in place before invitations are issued (see LWVILEF’s Guidelines to Developing a Candidate Participation Policy).
- Obtain local League board approval for the format and other procedures worked out by your committee in consultation with your voter service chair.
- Observe legal requirements (see LWVILEF’s “Legal Considerations for Candidate Forums/Debates”).
- Expenses for candidate Forums/Debates fall within LWVIL Ed Fund’s guidelines for Ed Fund expenses.
- A debate/forum must include at least two candidates for the office. LWVILEF Candidate Participation Policy can help with guidance.
- Candidates in a debate/forum must appear concurrently, face to face.
- LWVIL has the sole responsibility to contact statewide and federal candidates to arrange debates/forums. LWVIL has the first opportunity to contact federal candidates to arrange debates/forums. Local leagues are required to contact LWVIL prior to contacting candidates in federal races in order to ascertain if the LWVIL is already coordinating a debate/forum in federal races.
- Local Leagues are responsible for contacting candidates for all other levels of government.

- Do not mix levels of government in the same event unless the event is separated by a break between the two debates/forums. Keep the number of candidates manageable when you decide which races to undertake.
- Debates/forums should address a broad range of issues. If the co-sponsors decide to limit the range of issues, be sure they are still reasonably broad.
- You may email voterservice@lwvil.org or call the League office (312/939-5935) for the moderator list.

PROTECT THE LEAGUE'S NONPARTISAN STANCE!!

- Your local League Nonpartisan/Political Action Policy should encourage awareness of how others are likely to view your actions when you represent the League. This can save the League the painful experience of accusations and a wave of “bad press,” not to mention the difficulty of trying to regain your credibility once lost.
- Review your local Nonpartisan Political Action Policy and receive Board approval prior to any candidate forums.
- Political activity is restricted during the term of office for local League presidents, voter service chairs and any other board members or local League members identified by your League prior to each election as “high visibility.”
- Guard against actions that the public may perceive as showing favoritism to a particular candidate or party if you are President or Voter Service chair:
 - Don't sign petitions supporting a candidate or solicit contributions from individuals, and don't allow such activities at League meetings or events.
 - Avoid high visibility actions. Don't let your name be used in publicity or letter to the newspaper on a candidate's behalf. If pictures are taken at a League program, it's better not to send one of a League President and a candidate to the newspaper.
 - If you are identified (by your local League Board) as a high-visibility member, avoid putting signs in your yard or bumper stickers on your car supporting candidates or ballot issues on which the League has not taken a position.