

CANDIDATE FORUM POLICY

In order to carry out the League's goal of promoting an informed citizenry, the League of Women Voters of the Charleston Area is committed to providing public forums for all candidates seeking election.

By direction of its Board, the League may choose to sponsor such forums alone and therefore be responsible for all planning and for conduct of the forum.

Alternatively, the League may choose to co-sponsor forums by assisting a citizen group with planning. In this case, the League would provide the moderator and play a key role in the development of the format and procedures. Other tasks would be divided between the two organizations.

Non-sponsoring organizations may be enlisted as marketing partners and encouraged to share LWV promotional messages about candidate forums to their supporters and members.

Requests to co-sponsor a forum should be made by a civic organization or community group with a record of concern for public and legislative issues. The LWVCA asks that such requests be made far enough in advance to allow for planning and promotion of the forum.

Audio and video must be broadcast in its entirety except by media reporting on events.

Conflict of Interest Policy

The League may not co-sponsor or receive value in producing a forum from any individual, organization, or group that has an employment relationship, is aligned with, or would be perceived to favor a particular candidate who is invited to participate in the forum.

Leagues should participate in events only if the sponsoring groups have made and will make no endorsement during the entire election cycle. At the very least, Leagues should obtain in writing each of the co-sponsoring groups agreement that, if they are going to make an endorsement, they will not do so before the debate. In deciding how to work with such groups, a League needs to consider carefully how its participation might affect its nonpartisan status or the public's perception of the League's nonpartisanship. The Board must make sure that the ground rules are set to ensure that the activity is conducted in a strictly nonpartisan manner in keeping with League policy.

Criteria for Candidate Participation in League Sponsored or Co-Sponsored Forums:

1. The candidate must be legally qualified to hold the office for which s/he is running.
2. The candidate must be eligible to be on the ballot. If not on the ballot, and the candidate intends to be a write-in candidate, s/he must have evidence of a campaign by:
 - publicly announcing status as a write-in candidate,
 - interacting with citizens and media in actively discussing issues,
 - promoting candidacy through campaign website and/or campaign print materials,
 - and inform LWVCA of candidacy at least thirty days in advance of the scheduled forum date.

3. The candidate must appear at the forum in person; no substitutes, stand-ins, or statements will be allowed.
4. No "empty chair" forums are allowed; there must be at least two candidates present. If the forum is including candidates from multiple districts, then an individual candidate will have the option of participating should the opponent be a "no show," decline once the forum has been publicly announced, or refuse to commit when the invitation is extended.
5. The candidates must agree and adhere to the format established by the sponsoring organizations.
6. If the League agrees to sponsor or co-sponsor a forum, all significant candidates running for the same office will be invited to participate. The sponsoring organizations will use their "good faith judgment" in determining "significance," to include media coverage provided a candidate, party status, and evidence of support.
7. Federal and state election laws and regulations, if applicable, will supersede any contradictory criteria.
8. The choice of location for the forum must be dictated by non-political considerations.