

2019 GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDATE EVENTS

Purpose

The League of Women Voters organizes and hosts candidate events in order to:

- Educate the public about the issues in campaigns;
- Provide an opportunity for voters to witness candidates discuss those issues face-to-face;
- Stimulate public interest, and participation, in the elections; and,
- Provide an opportunity for the public to engage with candidates.

The League believes these purposes are best served by the adoption of nonpartisan, objective, and understandable written criteria for candidate inclusion. To that end, the League will apply the following guidelines for determining: a) whether candidates have the right to participate in League-sponsored events, and b) event operating rules.

Criteria for Candidate Participation

- Constitutional Eligibility: Candidates must meet requirements of the NYS Constitution and the Constitution of the United States.
- Ballot Access: Candidates must have met all requirements to be on the ballot according to NYS Election laws. This includes major and minor parties; no write-ins.

Based on the above criteria, the League's event planning team will make the final determination regarding eligibility for participation and offer invitations to qualified candidates in order to best serve the event's purposes.

Party Primary Elections

In a primary election race, an event among one political party's candidates for a given office is seen as a distinct and separate event. However, in a race for an office where multiple parties are each having primary elections to choose their candidates, our Leagues will seek to offer all parties the same opportunity to have an LWV-hosted candidate event.

Empty Chair Policy: Two or more candidates for each race must be present

According to the Federal Election Commission (FEC), a campaign debate for federal office requires at least two candidates, "face to face." No one can substitute for a candidate. Therefore, if only one candidate accepts the invitation, or if only one candidate shows up for the debate, the only option is to cancel the debate. The FEC regulations are quite clear on this point. The LWVNY policy applies these criteria to all our candidate events for all offices and at all governmental levels.

Format for Candidate Events

Experienced League members will serve as the event's Host and Moderators, as well as greeters, ushers, timekeepers, etc. Following candidate introductions by the Moderator, each candidate will make a timed opening statement, with the

order of speaking determined in advance by lot. For these statements and throughout the event, timekeepers will ensure that candidates stay within their allotted times. The overall duration of the event will be decided in advance and agreed to by all participating candidates.

Questions for the candidates may come from the attending audience, and/or also from a media panel. The media panel -- comprised of area newspaper, radio or TV personnel -- will, in rotation, pose their questions directly to the candidates. If there is a media panel, a League Moderator will introduce the media panel, and make certain League policies and procedures are followed.

Questions for the candidates may be posed in writing or orally by audience members in attendance. Each candidate will have the opportunity to answer all questions. The individual League will make this decision in advance of the Candidate Event.

Written questions: The attending audience will be invited to write their questions for the candidates on cards provided. These will be collected on an ongoing basis throughout the event, and reviewed by a panel of League members, thereby avoiding inappropriate or duplicative questions. The Moderator will pose these questions. This procedure allows questions to be repeated accurately, if needed, and avoids potential disruptions.

Oral questions: A microphone (standing or passed around the audience) will be used for audience members to ask questions of candidates. Questions must be asked within a set time limit. No one may pose a second question to the candidates until all others have had an opportunity to ask a question. The Moderator may rule questions either out of order (of a personal nature) or redundant.

Candidates will make timed closing statements in the same or reverse order from their opening statements.

Recording Policy

Only those specifically authorized by our Leagues may record this forum. The League of Women Voters owns the content of this forum and may post recordings of it in its entirety on League media. Any use of the authorized recording requires the advance approval of the League of Women Voters, except that other local Leagues may post the recording on their websites. Only licensed media, including TV, radio and newspapers are entitled to air portions of this recording, in keeping with Federal Communication Commission (FCC) regulations. No one is permitted to edit footage for campaign purposes.

Candidate Materials

No campaign signs, buttons, literature, marked clothing, or any other campaign-related paraphernalia will be permitted to be worn, displayed or distributed inside an event venue.