



League of Women Voters

Ground Rules for Candidates Debates and Forums

1. All candidates whose names will appear on the ballot for the contested office covered by the debate/forum are invited.
2. Candidates will bring no notes or props. Each candidate will be provided with a legal pad and pens for taking notes during the debate/forum.
3. Stand-ins or substitutes for candidates will not be allowed.
4. All correspondence will be sent to candidates in a traceable form.
5. The debate/forum must comply with any federal and state laws and regulations, be open to the public and be held in a place that will not seem to exclude any potential audience members.
6. Donations from candidates or political parties will not be solicited or accepted.
7. Campaign literature and signs must be placed outside the room in the designated area.
8. If a candidate cancels his/her appearance close to the scheduled debate/forum, the League may go forward with the debate/forum if at least two other candidates for the office will be participating.
9. The debate/forum must be staged in a way that does not promote or advance one candidate over another.
10. A debate/forum will not start if only one candidate for a contested race is present, but may proceed with candidates running for another office if the debate/forum has more than one segment.
11. The League will not have a debate/forum with only one participant ("empty chair" debate) following federal laws and regulations (including FEC, FCC and IRS) that govern the legality of the debate/forum.
12. Co-sponsors cannot have endorsed, or be affiliated with, a candidate prior to the debate/forum.
13. The League will provide the moderator and timekeeper. In no event shall the moderator be identified as a member of a political party or campaign committee or have any relationship with any of the candidates.
14. The candidates will not interrupt one another. Time limits on responses will be strictly observed. Time for rebuttal or further comment will be allowed after each candidate has had time to respond to each question.
15. The candidates' closing statements should be significantly related to the matters debated previously. Because there is no opportunity for rebuttal following the closing statements, candidates should refrain from personal attacks or charges.
16. Any broadcast must comply with all FCC requirements including at least two candidates in a debate/forum for any one office.
17. The broadcaster cannot edit the debate/forum. It must be broadcast in its entirety, either live or soon after the debate. The exception is news media reporting on the event.
18. Candidates cannot use or edit the footage in whole or in part for campaign purposes.
19. The content of the tape/recording belongs to the League. Any use of this tape requires the approval of the League with the caveat that it must be broadcast in its entirety. The footage can be posted in written or streaming audio/video on the League's website and the website of the broadcaster. The League may agree to requests by other websites if such a broadcast would not conflict with or might appear to conflict with the League's nonpartisan policy.
20. A press area will be provided near the entrance to the debate for arrival and departure photographs of the candidates and interviews after the debate if the candidates wish to speak to the press.
21. No flash cameras and no motor driven cameras will be used during the debate. All cell phones will either be turned off or muted.