

## **Guidelines for Organizing a Candidate Forum**

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(Adapted from League of Women Voters best practices)

### **Purpose of a Candidate Forum**

A candidate forum provides a neutral, structured opportunity for voters to hear directly from candidates about their positions, priorities, and qualifications. Forums should promote informed participation in the democratic process while maintaining strict nonpartisanship.

### **Core Principles**

- **Nonpartisanship:** The forum must not support or oppose any candidate or political party.
- **Fairness:** All qualified candidates must be invited and treated equally.
- **Transparency:** Rules, format, and expectations should be communicated clearly in advance.
- **Civility:** The tone should remain respectful and focused on issues, not personalities.

### **Planning the Forum**

#### **1. Determine Scope and Format**

- Identify which races will be included.
- Choose format: moderated Q&A, panel, or town hall.
- Set time limits (60–90 minutes).

#### **2. Invite Candidates**

- Invite all qualified candidates.
- Include date, time, format, and RSVP deadline.

#### **3. Select a Moderator**

- Neutral, respected individual.
- Enforces rules and timing.

### **Forum Structure**

- **Opening:** Welcome, rules, introductions.
- **Opening Statements:** Equal time.
- **Questions:** Screened and fair, rotate order.

- Rebuttals (optional): Equal opportunity.
- Closing Statements: Equal time.

### **Question Guidelines**

- Focus on issues and qualifications.
- Avoid personal attacks or partisan framing.

### **Logistics**

- Accessible venue with sound system.
- Timing tools and timekeeper.
- Audience guidelines (no disruptions).
- Tech setup for virtual/hybrid.

### **Supplies & Materials Checklist**

- Microphones, speakers
- Podium/table, chairs
- Timers, extension cords
- Name placards
- Agenda and rules
- Question cards
- Sign-in sheets
- Moderator & Staff Tools
- Script
- Question list
- Clipboards, pens
- Timing cue cards

### **Voter Engagement Materials**

- Voter registration forms
- Election info

### **Comfort & Accessibility**

- Water
- ADA accommodations

### **Technology & Recording**

- Camera, tripod
- Streaming setup
- Wi-Fi/hotspot
- Chargers

### **Room Setup Supplies**

- Tablecloths
- Directional signage
- Tape, scissors
- Trash bins

### **Handling Challenges**

- No-shows: proceed without substitute
- Disruptions: moderator restores order
- Rule violations: warning, enforce limits

### **After the Forum**

- Share recording
- Provide resources
- Thank participants
- Gather feedback