

League of Women Voters of Oakland MODERATOR TRAINING

This packet includes:

- Overview and expectations
- Organization and procedures
- Preparation
- Checklist of Questions to ask before the event
- Audio visual tips
- Handling difficult situations
- Order of questioning options
- Sample schedule
- Sample script
- Grid for keeping track of questions

Overview : What is Expected of the Moderator?

- The moderator's job is to ensure equal time for the issues and/or the candidates.
- The moderator's job is to provide a civil and productive environment by graciously but firmly enforcing the guidelines and rules that were carefully spelled out before the forum, for both the participants and the audience.
- The moderator does not contribute comments of his/her own – the moderator's function is to facilitate and encourage questioners and candidates.
- Because unforeseen problems do arise, the moderator should be quick-witted and resourceful at problem solving.
- You do not have to invent all this yourself. These guidelines and tips are the fruit of many years of League experience; they are here to help you.

Candidate Forum Organization and Procedures

- Important: Other League or co-sponsor volunteers are responsible for making these happen. The moderator should be aware of them and know who is doing what. *Get the lay of the land.* You can ask for this information ahead of time, when you agree to moderate the forum, or when you first arrive.
- Key LWVO Voter Service volunteers for the November 2018 elections:

Candidate Forum planning & contact with cosponsors :

Louise Anderson lwvocandidateforums@gmail.com cell 551-5672

Volunteer Coordinator: Joey Hansell joey.hansell@gmail.com 482-1139
Day-of coordinator at Forums:

Mary Weinstein mpweins1@yahoo.com cell 510-220-8939

Overall Voter Service chair & coordinator:

Deborah Shefler voterservice@lwvoakland.org cell ph 333 2820

Pre-Forum Prep

- Review ground rules with candidates before the forum starts (see separate document).
- Please review attached sample script ahead of time. It contains many of the rules governing the proceeding.

Checklist of Questions to Ask Before the Event

- If co-sponsored, who are the key co-sponsor contact people for
 - Event planning
 - Day-of coordinator to be present at the event
 - Emergencies
- Audience
 - About how many are expected to attend?
 - Are there issues specific to this district that may be controversial or sensitive?
- Co-Sponsors
 - Have they co-sponsored a forum with the League before?
 - If not, do they have a clear understanding of the non-partisan policy?
 - If this particular organization also endorses candidates, it should be clear that any mention of endorsement at this event is misplaced.
- Location
 - How do you get in?
 - How do you get there?
 - Where should you park?
 - Where in the building is the forum?
- Set-up – Will there be a podium?
 - How many mikes will there be?
 - Where will I be?
 - Where will the audience be?
 - Where will the speakers be arranged?
 - Will the table be skirted?
 - Will there be name cards?

- Who will keep time? How?
- Who will supply water?
- Program
 - What is the format in terms of timing? How many minutes for opening/closing statements, responses to each question, rebuttal if any, based on number of candidates, questions, time allotted overall?
 - Have the candidates been made aware of the format?
 - Have you coordinated with question gatherers/sorters and timers?
 - Who will ask questions and how?
 - Will there be a reception before or after?
 - How tight is the time?
 - Who will introduce me?
 - Will I do the introduction and closing?
- Publicity – How is this forum being advertised and does it have competition?

Audio Visual Tips

- Moderator stands at the podium and, in opening and closing statements, looks at the camera.
- When asking questions, look at the candidates.
- There is no need to look at the audience in attendance – you are addressing the YouTube audience.
- Speak directly into the mike to be heard on line.
- Do not wear any campaign badges or other campaign slogans.

Handling Difficult Situations

...a candidate keeps going when his/her time is up?

Interrupt gently, but firmly. "Excuse me, Mr. Candidate, but you have used up your time." You can let people finish their sentences, but some people's sentences never end.

...a candidate gets obstreperous?

Address him/her directly. "Ms. Candidate, you are out of order." "Mr. Candidate, I must remind you once again that you are not being fair to the other candidates."

...a member of the audience is unruly?

Address him/her directly. "Sir, please sit down and wait your turn." Or "Please respect the rules we have established so that we may have an orderly discussion of the issues." Usually, your comments and growing peer pressure from the audience will do the trick. If it doesn't call a brief recess and speak to the rabble rouser yourself.

...the audience gets unruly?

Remind the audience that this not a rally for voters who have already made up their minds, but a non-partisan meeting for those who have not. You can use such comments as: "We understand that many of you have strong feelings about this election (issue), but others have come tonight to help them decide how to vote. Please let us use all our time for discussion of the issues." Or "Please, let's not waste time that should be spent discussing the issues." Remember that you have the authority to call a recess to review the ground rules with the co-sponsors and participants. You even have the authority to decide that the conditions do not exist for a useful discussion of the issues and adjourn the meeting.

...a question to a candidate is really a personal attack?

This should not happen when we have question-sorters whose job is to screen all audience-submitted questions. If a different format is used, it may possibly occur. Rule the question out of order explaining that we are here for an open, orderly exchange on the issues, not character assassination. Ask for another question.

...there is a challenge to your authority and the way you are conducting the meeting?

Calmly restate the ground rules and proceed. If the challenge continues, you can call a recess and caucus with the candidates and sponsors. This shouldn't happen if there have been careful preparations.

...a "question" is really a statement?

Interrupt. "Please phrase your statement as a question." Some moderators time the *questions* as well as the answers.

...all the questions are on the same subject?

When the questions are submitted in writing, you and the question sorter can consolidate them and explain to the audience "We have three questions on the same topic – here is what they are asking ."

...the audience is very small?

Consider rearranging chairs in a more informal setting such as a circle and perhaps adopting a more conversational format. Give candidates more time to answer questions.

...you run out of questions?

Adjourn. Sometimes the audience is small or the race lacks hot issues. Just move ahead to the closing statements and send the grateful audience home to bed.

...people demand to see the written questions afterwards?

Refuse them. This has caused great trouble in the past. One campaign worker called unanswered questions into the newspaper after the meeting and they were published (inaccurately) in the next edition. Questioners' handwriting may be recognized and their privacy invaded. So, keep the questions yourself, show them to no one and destroy them after the meeting.

Order of Questioning Options

Use the grid attached to the model script to keep track of how many questions each candidate has answered. Make sure the candidates all have an equal chance to talk.

There are a variety of models. Please pick one that is consistent with the number of candidates.

1. One question asked of all candidates, rotating which candidate gets to answer first. A variation is to allow the first candidate a longer time to answer, with shorter follow up responses. When everyone answers every question it can be boring.
2. A question goes to 2 or 3 candidates Then a new question goes to the next 1-3 candidates. Again, time limits can be longer for first responders. This format is more lively for the audience.
3. Candidates have tokens for responses. For example, with 12 questions each candidate has an equal number, 6-8, of tokens or numbered cards they can use on follow up responses to any question. Use of tokens will be recorded by LWVO on a chart visible to the audience. Candidates don't know what the questions will be, so have to guess whether this is one that they want to spend their time on. If they have tokens left at the end, they can use it to add to closing statement time.
4. Three candidates get to answer each question, a different group of three each time and with different candidates starting off. At the end there is one round in which everyone gets to talk about one question that they wish they'd gotten to answer.
5. The lightning round is popular, in which the candidates are forced to answer yes, no or undecided to specific questions. Such questions can be hard to write, but if the audience is asked to think about such questions they might come up with some good ones.
6. It is not necessary to draw lots for speaking order. No one has objected to randomly assigned speaking order.
7. Closing statements should be presented in reverse order from the opening remarks.

Sample Schedule

6:05 Start

6:10 Opening statements

6:25 General questions

7:33 last question

7:37 Actual last question to everyone: what question did you want to answer, but were not asked?

7:45 lightning round

7:50 closing statements

7:59 thank you and good night

Candidate Forum Sample Script

Welcome and thank you for being with us tonight _____ [insert date and name of Forum]. I am _____ of the League of Women Voters of Oakland. The League of Women Voters is a trusted membership organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We do not endorse or oppose candidates or political parties. The League participates in issue advocacy and voter education. The advocacy arm of the League may take positions on issues such as arise in ballot measures. This Forum is presented by the education arm of the League, which does not take positions or advocate for them.

I'd like to remind everyone that the candidates (if there are co-sponsoring groups also mention their names) have all agreed to participate under Guidelines set for this forum. The guidelines are also posted outside the room.

As a matter of courtesy, please turn off all electronic devices. Please be aware that campaign literature or other forms of campaigning, such as buttons and tee shirts, signs, are not permitted inside the forum room, in order to maintain neutrality.

We are videotaping tonight's forum (and broadcasting through KTOP if appropriate), and the session will be available on YouTube, through our website and on social media for the broader community to access. You can find links on our website, LWVOakland.org, or through VotersEdge.org/ca.

We have ___ forums on the agenda tonight. The first will be for the position of _____. There are ___ candidates running for this position. They are _____. The second forum this evening will be for the position of _____. There are ___ candidates running for that position. They are _____.*

GROUND RULES

Let's go over a few ground rules. Each candidate has ___ minutes for opening remarks. [Timing to be determined by length of forum and number of candidates.] The speaking order has been randomly assigned. The timekeepers will signal candidates with colored signs marked 30 seconds and STOP.

As audience members arrived, our volunteers provided cards for submitting written questions. The questions will be screened to avoid duplication and anything inappropriate. The order of answering the questions will alternate and each candidate will have ___ minute to respond to each question.

There will be no separate rebuttals. However, the candidates may choose to use some or all of their ___ minute to rebut the response given by another candidate. Following the questions, each candidate shall have ___ minute for a closing statement in reverse order from opening statements.

Now let's begin with our [first forum and] first candidate:
[Each gives opening statement of ____ minutes.]

Now, it is time for the candidates to answer your questions.
[Use questions from audience processed by question sorters, then pre-prepared questions. If time allows or there are no more questions, entertain questions from the floor.]

This next question will be the last one so that we may end on time.

Now, the candidates will make closing statements. We will reverse the order that we began with.
[Each gives closing statement of ___ minute.]

ENDING THE SESSION

On behalf of the LWVO, I want to thank the candidates for running for this office and for their participation this evening. I also want to thank the audience for coming to meet the candidates and proposing thoughtful questions. For further information about upcoming forums, the candidates, and ballot measures, please visit the League's award winning and easy to use website, lwvoakland.org or votersedge.org/ca. There you will find information about candidates and ballot measures, and links to other sources of information about the upcoming election.

Members of the League of Women Voters do the hands-on work to safeguard democracy. While we never endorse a candidate, we are directly involved in shaping important issues to keep our community strong. If you would like to be involved with the men and the women helping make democracy work, it's easy to join the League. We encourage you to visit our website at lwvoakland.org. Visit us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. Look for the League's Oakland Easy Voter Guide inserted in the October __ issue of the East Bay Express.

The deadline to register to vote is _____. If you have moved or changed your name or wish to change your party affiliation since you last registered, you need to re-register by _____. On-line voter registration is available at the Secretary of State's website, sos.ca.gov. And we have voter registration forms available right here tonight. Please stop at our table on your way out for forms and other information.

Remember to vote by mail or at the polls _____. Encourage your family,

friends, and neighbors to vote.

*If there is a missing candidate state:

There will be ___ candidates listed on your November ballot for this position.
_____ is a candidate for this office who could not attend this forum.

The ___ candidates participating tonight met the criteria for participation according to our rules [shared with co-sponsors], which include:

- Presence of publicly accessible campaign headquarters.
- Telephone number, other than a personal or home number, listed under the campaign's name.
- Campaign bank account and treasurer.
- Registration with the California Secretary of State as a formal campaign committee.

Here is a grid to help you keep track of which candidates have answered how many questions.

CANDIDATES

QUESTIONS

Pledge of Allegiance (if there is a flag in the room)
“I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”,