

League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford (lwwgh.org)

Part of the LWVCT

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<i>The League is a nonpartisan organization which does not support or oppose political parties or candidates.</i>									
Debate Format									

CUMULATIVE TIME DEBATE FORMAT¹

This format is designed to enable candidates to freely elaborate on their approaches to a variety of issues, unimpeded by the strict time constraints of a more traditional debate format. The LWVCT has found this format promotes interchange between candidates, allows them to hold each other to account, and keeps the voters' interest while enabling them to see the difference between the candidates.

Each candidate, when speaking, is timed by his or her own timekeeper and each cumulative time is kept. Periodically, generally whenever one candidate stops speaking and another begins, all the timekeepers simultaneously hold up their signs indicating the amount of time used by each candidate. The moderator and the candidates see how their time usage compares, and the candidates can self-moderate to balance any significant discrepancies in time usage. In addition, from time to time the moderator informs candidates if sizable discrepancies appear to be developing so that candidates who are behind may avail themselves of the opportunity to use more time. This format encourages a candidate to respond as briefly as desired on a topic deemed less important or on which there is no disagreement and to use the allotted time to discuss more fully subjects considered more important.

Candidates are encouraged to rebut and sur-rebut, responding to their differences as they perceive them, understanding that the "clock is running." In this format candidates have the opportunity to hold each other to account rather than having this role assumed by the moderator and/or panelists. The moderator simply reminds the candidates of the clock and moves to another question when the topic appears exhausted. Candidates are not allowed to "save up" time during the questioning and use it to make a speech at the end.

Each round of discussion is initiated by the moderator/one of the members of the panel. The same question is addressed to each candidate before direct debate between/among candidates is invited. Candidates take turns being first to respond to the question.

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Each candidate has two minutes for a closing statement. The order of precedence is determined by lot prior to the debate. The winner chooses his position in the order of the closing statements. The same order is used to begin the questioning.

¹The League is indebted to Don Noel of *The Hartford Courant* for introducing us to the concept of cumulative time for debates. Over time our experience has led us to vary his approach somewhat but his original concept is still here.