

Moderator Training LWVGH (revised 1/2022)

Important Points from the Moderator Training Workshop (Revised CGM 1/2022)

Role of the Moderator

As a Moderator, you preside over the event and have the authority to:

- call the meeting to order,
- recognize speakers,
- control the audience,
- adjust ground rules to meet unexpected circumstances,
- adjourn the meeting if the event gets out of control.

You are the boss!

Debate Planning- overview

The following decisions are made by the Voter Service chair and approved by the local Board, but the Moderator needs to be up-to-date on all the decisions as they are finalized.

- date, time and place and length of debate;
- contacts made with party chairs and relevant contacts
- live debate, in-studio, virtual?
- candidates, their party affiliation, office sought, incumbency, bios for intro (approx.50 words)
- co-sponsors, if any, roles and responsibilities of each party;
- format and rules: examples -a panel? questions from the audience live or written?
- Criteria for candidate participation: all candidates, or LWVCT criteria, or local criteria?
- adequate support personnel needed: timers, ushers, question screeners; more
- media participation; live coverage?
- Letters/email for candidates' invitations- candidates, party chairs, campaign aides, etc.

Ask to be copied on all correspondence with the candidates, co-sponsors and media. This is very important because some requests come from other than LWV. Do not hesitate to ask questions, raise issues and offer alternatives, if needed. Do not accept an invitation to moderate a debate if you are not comfortable with the rules.

Debate Organization – Remember, You are the Boss

The arrangements are the responsibility of the local Leagues who inform all candidates. However, the Moderator may be contacted separately from an organization to request your expertise and then you are the primary contact. You can always request support from your local or state League. Moderator should:

- be prepared to review the format and rules with candidates to make sure they understand what is expected, even if complete explanations were given in previous written materials; collect the bios and tell candidates that if bios are more than the short ones requested, you will have to judge what to cut (allow them to make adjustments prior to the start);
- allow enough time to draw lots (bring a coin, slips of paper, etc.) for precedence in introduction, question response order, and order of closing statements;
- make sure candidates are seated in order in which they will speak at least 5 minutes before debate begin. This can be altered as circumstances dictate;
- check that water has been provided for you and the candidates, if live;

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- make sure candidates know where their timers are sitting and can see the signs used by the timers;
- make sure you have planned who will introduce the debate- you or another person;
- check who will deliver the bios of candidates? You, with submitted SHORT bios requested ahead? Or candidates themselves with a time limit? Printed bios;
- check if it is your job to welcome the audience. This is a good place to tell the members of the audience that it is their turn in the process – their assigned job now is to listen and compare candidates;
- ask the audience to refrain from applause and partisan expression; it takes away from the time to hear and evaluate candidates during the debate.
- refer to everyone by their formal names
 - LWVGH does not use titles, attorney, mayor, etc.;
 - make sure you pronounce names correctly. You may want to have phonetic spellings as needed. Do not hesitate to ask for a pronunciation-it will be appreciated.
 - there are circumstances in which people are addressed by first name; important to be consistent during the debate for all involved;
- review the format for the audience as part of your introduction; also good for the candidates to hear that the audience knows what to expect. (LWVGH has a template intro for you.);
- inform everyone that a key rule for LWVGH events like this is that candidates are expected to structure their answers toward policy positions held, not the personal attributes or behaviors of opponents. Request participants to focus on policy differences;
- be sure to enforce rules politely but firmly and in a nonpartisan manner;
- **be careful of your facial expressions; you cannot insert yourself into the debate;**
- make sure if audience questions are used that you have some League questions in reserve and/or have back up "short questions" to fill up the time before closing remarks;
- be ready to repeat a question, be helpful and keep your sense of humor;
- admit a mistake, apologize briefly, correct it, and continue forum;
- be aware of time; have a good clock/timer for your personal use;
- clearly articulate the close of the debate; initiate the closing statements of the candidates and advise timers to reset their clocks.
- be clear as to whether you as moderator will do closing comments or another LWV member or a partner/host.

A Good Moderator is Prepared

About a week prior to the debate, contact the Voter Service chair to make sure:

- the items covered in Debate Organization have been taken care of.
- candidates are confirmed and informed of the format agreed upon;
- stop watches or other timing devices provided and in working order;
- name cards and water for moderator and candidates, if needed for live debate, are all set;
- candidates have been asked to appear **20 minutes ahead** for mic checks, lottery for order of precedence, and format recap;
- you are prepared to introduce the event, yourself, and candidates as previously decided,

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- recap format with candidates and audience, and review procedures with timers;
- you have checked that **questions are not leading** or in any way partisan (See Question and format summary);
- you are prepared to explain that LWV requests that there be no applause and no partisan expressions of support or opposition during the debate (gives candidates more time to respond to questions). Give hearty applause at the end of the debate!

The Day of the Debate

Arrive at least **30 minutes** before the candidates to check microphones, make sure timers can be easily seen by you and candidates, ascertain that there are no format or rules changes; train timers or make sure they are trained;

15-20 minutes before debate starts, call all candidates together, introduce yourself; collect bios for introductions go over format and ground rules (make it clear that personal attacks about candidates and families will be ruled out of order, be sure everyone understands the timing signals, draw lots for precedence;

5 minutes before debate starts have candidates seated. Revise/update your precedence sheet based on the drawing of lots.

During the Debate once a candidate has started speaking, do not interrupt unless remarks are out of order, be alert to timers' signals, be aware of time limits to make sure everyone will have a chance to answer the last question and still have enough time for closing statements. At the end of the debate, thank the participants and audience, remind everyone to vote and give the date, adjourn unless the sponsor requests to adjourn.