

**Virtual Candidate Forum Summary of Things to Consider, Options, Suggestions
and Resources**

Virtual Candidate Forum Summary of Things to Consider, Options, Suggestions and Resources

Introduction

In order to assist local Leagues having to do virtual candidate forums for the first time, we researched what other local Leagues have been doing around the United States. We reviewed several how-to presentations/documents, and actual candidate forums with the focus on the virtual technical aspects of doing a candidates forum.

Major Issues to Consider When Determining Virtual Meeting Options to Use

While there are multiple platforms that can be used, major issues we found to consider in which solution to utilize included:

- Screen control - ensuring proper candidate is being featured and not interrupted or utilizing option to show all candidates all the time
- Time Control - ensuring all candidates can see the time remaining to speak
- Sound Control - ensuring the muting and unmuting is handled appropriately.

Suggested Virtual Options for Format from Simple to More Complex

Simple Options #1 – Hire a company to handle all the technical aspects of the forum including:

- Using their streaming platform
- During forum would handle screen, sound, and time control
- After forum – any editing and posting to YouTube
- Editing includes adding intro screens with League logos closing information screens such as where to get more information on Voter's Edge.

Lee County League in Florida utilized the Alliance for the Arts. The cost is \$25 per hour. A one hour candidate forum would cost approximately \$75. League members would handle the traditional role of moderator and questions. The Alliance for the Arts has a time clock at the bottom of the candidate screen. It was the most professional time clock solution we found. Contact Bill Taylor at theatre@artinlee.org . Phone (239) 634-4629

Simple Option #2 – Instead of a candidate's forum with all candidates present, you can choose to interview each candidate separately asking the same questions and keeping the same time constraints on answering questions. This allows Leagues to utilize the normal virtual meeting option with the moderator and the candidate.

Option #3 – Doing the candidate's forum utilizing League members only - Due to the items mentioned above, while it is possible to do a candidates forum as a regular meeting, the webinar feature available on multiple platforms provides more control and is recommended. Leagues can upgrade an account for a month at a time to use the webinar feature at a cost of approximately \$40.

Options for Putting Forums on Web

Local Leagues have used different options for posting their forums (see below). Do not forget to post links on your website, and Voter's Edge.

- Facebook
- Vimeo
- YouTube
- Community Channel Website

Planning Activities

Virtual Forum Items to include in Candidate Agreement - No matter what virtual candidate forum solution your League decides to do add rules covering the topics below in addition to the normal candidate forum rules:

- Technical Requirements for Computer, Camera, Microphone as suggested by platform
 - Such as utilize wired internet, good headset with microphone
- League Requirements for Candidate Background and Screen Name (Use same name as shown on ballot)
- Planning a Pre-Planning session with candidates or at minimum requirement to be 15 minutes earlier especially if it is a live event
- Copyright rules on use of the video

Suggested Article to Candidates Regarding Camera Appearance - Below is a good article that provides good suggestions on camera presence including lighting, angle of camera, and sound. Click [here](#)

Candidate Forum Format Considerations

- Control Candidate speaking and showing on Screen during the forum – Leagues have used both options: showing all candidates all the time, or only showing the candidate speaking at the time. The second option provides a more focused and professional image.
- Timing Options – Timer another panelist using paddles, timer on iPad or phone, using a web based application that displays a countdown timer (See LVW San Diego documentation).
- Questions Options - Determine how to handle questions for the forum
 - Pre-set questions with no public input
 - Ask the public before the forum
 - If live candidate forum how questions will be submitted from the chat room to moderator
- Live or Recorded - If this is your first time doing a virtual candidate's forum you might want to consider recording the session. You can still take questions from the public that were submitted ahead of the event.

Practice Session for League Facilitator/Technician - It is important that the League facilitator and technicians have a pre-planning session utilizing the platform and all the features with all League helpers to ensure all understand roles and options before any session with candidates

- Check moderator screen for light/background
- Note suggestion on color of clothes stay away from white and black colors
- Ensure screen control is working properly
- Test unmuting and muting capabilities
- Test timing options
- Test how questions from audience will be screened and shared with moderator

Practice Session with Candidates - If the candidate forum will be live, it is good practice to have a practice session with the candidates or at minimum require they sign in before the live session to ensure all understand the procedures.

Forum Content

- Educate Community About League – Make sure to include an introduction to the forum that covers the items below. Also at the end of the forum mention Voter's Edge website again.
 - Who and What the League stands for
 - Voter's Edge website
 - Information on the position
 - Position purpose, term, pay, geographic area of position
- Explanation of candidate forum for audience benefit (usual League language)
- Copyright assertion and note that the use of video must show whole forum to be shown from beginning to end --no excerpts

Moderator Role at Virtual Candidate Forum

Mony Flores-Bauer from the LWV of Oakland developed a handbook for the moderator overseeing virtual candidate's forum. Click [here](#)

Sources

- League of Women Voters of Florida – All files on their google drive click [here](#)
 - Good zoom best practices and detail info on sharing zoom meeting on Facebook, question/answer on different topics
- League of Women Voters of Michigan – PowerPoint, compare regular platforms to webinars, lots of good links to articles and tutorials click [here](#)
- League of Women Voters of Illinois –PowerPoint – Some information on virtual forums, more information on conducting regular candidate forum click [here](#)
- League of Women Voters of Los Alamos – Documentation of their experience, used zoom webinar click [here](#)
- League of Women Voters of Cooperstown Area & League of Women Voters of the Oneonta Area – Guidelines for forum—placed on website click [here](#)
- League of Women Voters of Placer County – draft documentation of their procedures click [here](#)
- League of Women Voters of San Diego – Web based Timer Option – click [here](#)
- League of Women Voters of Oakland – [Candidate Guidelines for the Moderator Role in a Virtual Environment -2020](#)