



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEW JERSEY EDUCATION FUND

VOTERS SERVICE MANUAL

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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SECTION I

VOTER SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Voters Service, the face of our organization, is the foundation upon which the League of Women Voters was established in 1920, and remains today as the basis of our credibility, our visibility, and our effectiveness. The objective of LWVNJ is “to promote informed and active participation in government”. **THAT** is voter service!

The League nonpartisan stance is unique. Others may proclaim nonpartisanship, but only in the League is it so assiduously guarded, discussed, reviewed and followed. Because of this concern with non-alignment and objectivity, people trust us to carry out the voters’ service efforts for which we are known and respected. These efforts include:

- Voter registration drives
- Candidates debates and forums
- Candidates information publications
- Our toll-free voter assistance hotline, 1-800-792-VOTE (8683)
- www.lwvnj.org and www.lwv.org
- Public service announcements regarding election dates and procedures
- Civic education in schools and communities

JOB DESCRIPTION

You, as voters service director, probably have the most rewarding and continuous job in League. It is a year-round responsibility. All of the activities listed above come under your jurisdiction, as well as the general monitoring of local League activities to ensure the separation of program from voters service. As voters service director, public perception of LWV nonpartisanship and credibility is a crucial part of your job.

JOB ORGANIZATION

Form a committee. It may seem like more effort in the beginning, but it pays off in the long run. Use your membership list and contact new members. They will find such tasks as registering voters, timing candidates forums, and gathering information for candidates information sheets exciting and rewarding. Voters service is an opportunity to get new members involved in League.

Delegate authority. Your job is to see that an activity is accomplished, not to do it yourself. Use your committee. Perhaps you will assign a specific job responsibility to a specific member e.g. registration drives, candidates sheets, etc. If you are an area League, you may want to assign tasks geographically.

Make sure you have all the tools you will need:

1. *How to Plan A Voter Registration Drive*
2. *Voter Service Manual*
3. *New Jersey Citizen's Guide to Government*
4. Local nonpartisan policy statement
5. *Local League Leaders Guide*
6. Files passed along from your predecessor

Work in coalition. You may be approached to accomplish some tasks in coalition with others. This may give you additional help, but be certain that the League's goals and nonpartisanship will be strictly enforced. Agreeing to work in coalition is a board decision, but in the area of voter service, your recommendation will be the strongest factor involved.

Maintain integrity. It is crucial that the public continues to perceive the League as a trusted source of nonpartisan, unbiased election information. In order to accomplish this, LWVNJ's positional issues (issues that LWVNJ decides after careful study to take a position on) and voters service must be kept separate. Do not, for example, use the same personnel to speak on the program issue and the election process. Do not distribute League positions on issues in any voter service materials or at any voter service meetings and events. **We must never be perceived as supporting a party or a candidate.**

Our lobbying success often stems from the trust of elected officials, developed when they were candidates running for office. Our Voters Service tradition of objectivity and impartiality is the foundation of our public credibility and effectiveness. It must be safeguarded.

VOTER SERVICE RECOMMENDED TIMELINES

(refer to <http://www.lwvnj.org/voting.html> for dates)

Vote Tuesday Lawn Signs go up the Wednesday before each election and come down the day after the election. These signs can be purchased through the League's state office.

JUNE/JULY

- Meet with your committee to develop plans for the year ahead and to assign tasks. Determine what offices are up for election.
- Decide on the form and distribution technique for your voters' guide or candidates' sheets.
- Formulate candidates' questions for submission to your local board for approval.

AUGUST

- Make arrangements for registration drive.
- Consult with your PR director on promotion plans.
- Contact county officials to secure registration and mail-in ballot application forms. Use public service announcements, letters to the editor, local TV programs - whatever it takes - to inform the public of the registration process.
- Get Board approval of your candidates' questions.
- Prepare questionnaires and letters to candidates.
- If you are planning candidates' forums, set up dates and locations, ensure availability of candidates, call the LWVNJ office to obtain a moderator.

SEPTEMBER

- Conduct voter registration drive for general election.
- Publicize the registration deadline.
- Reconfirm the list of candidates, which may change up to 48 days before the General Election.
- Mail questionnaires and letters to candidates.
- Distribute Voters Guide information.
- Confirm dates with candidates and contact media.
- Continue registration efforts up to deadline (21 days before the election).

OCTOBER

- Provide citizen information on registration, mail-in ballot procedure, write-in voting and other General Election facts. Advise voters that anyone registered can vote by mail-in ballot.
- Publicize and conduct candidates' forums.
- Distribute posters and publicize the LWVNJ toll-free voter assistance hotline: 1-800-792-VOTE (8683); questions on the election process or the issues may be referred to the same number.
- Encourage voting!
- Assist institutionalized citizens to vote by mail-in ballot.

NOVEMBER

- Remind people that they can vote in person (mail-in ballot) until 3 pm the day before the election at their county clerk's office.

DECEMBER

- Evaluate election season efforts.
- Inform the League of Women Voters of New Jersey state office of your successes. For example, report number of voter registration drives held, number of people registered, quantity and type of material distributed, etc.
- Record suggestions for future improvement.

JANUARY

- Distribute information on School Board Election, if applicable, publicizing filing procedure and deadline.

FEBRUARY

- Formulate questions for school board candidates and submit to your local League for approval.
- Set up date and location for school board candidates forums.
- Have a public meeting on the school budget if needed. Seek a co-sponsor if possible.

MARCH

- Mail questionnaires and letters to candidates.
- Begin work on May Municipal Election(s) if applicable. Your municipality or other municipalities in the area you serve may conduct nonpartisan elections in May.
- Conduct voter registration drive for school board election.
- Plan voter registration drive for primary election.
- Conduct school board forums, late March or early April.

APRIL

- Encourage voter turnout for School Board Election.
- Conduct voter registration drive.
- Continue working on Municipal Election(s) if applicable.

MAY

- Encourage voting in Municipal Election(s).
- Provide citizen information on Primary Election facts.

Membership Material at Education Fund Events

Because of recent IRS regulation changes, you may actively recruit members, as well as provide membership material at all Voters' Service activities.

VOTER REGISTRATION INFORMATION (See Appendix A for Form)

REGISTER TO VOTE if you are or will be:

- a U.S. citizen
- 18 years or older by the date of the next election
- a resident at your present address for at least 30 days by the date of the next election

YOU ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO VOTE if you:

- have been adjudged mentally incompetent
- are on parole, probation, or serving a sentence due to a felony conviction under state or federal law. You have the right to vote upon completion of your sentence, parole or probation after re-registering.

WHEN TO RE-REGISTER:

REGISTRATION IS PERMANENT, but you must re-register if you:

- Change your name. If a registered voter changes his or her name due to marriage, divorce or by judgment of the court, the individual must notify the commission of registration in writing by filing a new voter registration form (check "name change") or a postcard change of name form. If a registered voter does not submit this change 21 days before an election, s/he is entitled to vote only in the next election by signing the registration sheet at the polls with both the previous and new name. After that, s/he must re-register using the new name.
- Change your address. You must re-register; check "address change" on the voter registration form. If you have moved within the county since you last registered to vote and have not re-registered, you have the right to vote by provisional ballot at your new election district after completing an affirmation statement. Your provisional ballot serves as a registration form. If you move, even within the same election district, you should let election officials know as soon as possible, and promptly return the change of address card you will be sent.
 - If you moved to a new county within 21 days before an election, you can vote at your old polling place by provisional ballot after completing an Affirmation of Residency form. Check with election officials to verify procedures.
 - If you moved to a new county more than 21 days before an election, and did not complete the change of address process in time, you cannot vote.
- If you had been disqualified to vote and are no longer disqualified, you must re-register.
- Have completed your sentence, parole or probation.

CURRENTLY, ALL REGISTERED VOTERS RECEIVE IN THE MAIL A SAMPLE BALLOT one week before each election (they are not provided for fire district elections). However, legislation has been introduced to change how sample ballots are distributed (for example, sending one to a household as opposed to each registered voter in the household). Sample ballots contain the following information:

- Location of your polling place
- Hours polls are open

- Offices to be voted on, candidates names, district and municipality
- Public questions (general election only)
- Operating instructions for the voting machines
- Instructions for how to “write in” a candidate

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

In a primary you may vote on only one party’s ballot. Currently only Republican and Democratic parties qualify for primary elections. In New Jersey you may declare a party affiliation when registering to vote, but you are not required to do so. If you are an unaffiliated voter (did not declare a political party either when registering to vote or by voting in a past primary election), you may declare at the polls the day of a primary election. After your first vote in a primary election, you are deemed a member of the party whose ballot you voted. If you wish to change the party of your choice, you must declare, in writing, your party of current choice with your County Clerk, County Board of Elections, or Municipal Clerk at least 55 days before the primary election. Political Party Affiliation Declaration Forms are available on the League’s web site, www.lwvnj.org.

MAIL-IN BALLOT APPLICATIONS

Under New Jersey law, registered voters do not need to be out of state on election day to vote by mail-in ballot, and do not need to provide a reason for requesting one.

Registered voters in New Jersey interested in voting by mail-in ballot can visit lwvnj.org to print out an application in English or Spanish.

On the application, voters will select the upcoming election in which they wish to vote by mail. In addition, there are two options to receive future mail-in ballots automatically:

- By selecting Option A, the voter will automatically receive mail-in ballots for all elections for the remainder of the calendar year. Voters choosing Option A must renew their request each calendar year to continue to receive mail-in ballots automatically.
- By selecting Option B, the voter will automatically receive a mail-in ballot for all future November General Elections.

Voters may choose either Option A or B, both options, or none. If no option is chosen, you will only be sent the ballot for the election you chose in Section 1: general, primary, municipal, fire, special or school (which will include all special school elections until the next annual school election).

Once completed and signed, the application can be mailed to the county clerk. The mailed application must be **received (not postmarked)** by the county clerk no later than seven days prior to Election Day. A registered voter may complete an application in person at the office of the County Clerk until 3:00 p.m. the day before the election.

The county clerk cannot accept faxed or emailed copies of a Mail-In Ballot Application, with the exception of Military or Overseas Voters, since an original signature is required.

**QUESTIONS? CALL LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW JERSEY
1-800-792-VOTE (8683) DURING BUSINESS HOURS**

VOTERS GUIDE/CANDIDATES INFORMATION SHEETS

Production

With your committee you need to set up a working calendar. First, determine the filing deadline of official candidates of the particular election for which you are producing printed information. Other dates to include on your calendar are:

- Committee meeting to formulate questions and compose cover letter
- Board meeting for approval of questions and letters
- Writing and mailing questionnaire and letter
- Deadline for return
- Copy to printer
- Finished publication
- Distribution

The committee meeting to set the questions should decide:

- Offices to be included
- Word limit for answers for each office
- Inclusion of independent or third party candidates (Do include them if possible, so voters will be completely educated.)

After your board has approved your plans and questions, the questionnaire and cover letter should be composed. After the filing deadline, obtain an official list of certified candidates from the governmental unit calling the election. (Remember to re-check this information 47 days before General Election.)

The cover letter should state:

- Why the Voters' Guide/Candidates' Sheet is being printed
- Why the questionnaire is being sent
- That there is a word limit and why
- Any additional guidelines you have set (rules about foul language, personal attacks, etc)
- The deadline and address for return of the questionnaire
- The name and telephone number of a League person the candidate can contact

Mail the cover letter, questionnaire and self-addressed envelope to candidates by certified mail, return receipt requested. This gives proof that the candidates have received the questionnaire. If the receipt is not returned within a week, telephone. Some Leagues hand deliver. The important thing is to make sure the candidates receive the questionnaire.

Include on the questionnaire a place for the candidate's signature verifying what she/he said. These need to be kept safely in the event the candidate changes a stand on an issue and accuses the League of misquotation. Also, carefully explain what editing the League will do. Most Leagues in New Jersey do not edit grammar, spelling or alter the response in any way. If you have a word limit, explain how exceeding it will be handled.

When deciding on the printing format, obtain samples of what other Leagues do, if possible. Most guides are newspaper tabloid size, but other types could and have been used and are equally effective. Contact a printer, or consider asking the local newspaper to publish the guide as a public service. Make sure if your newspaper agrees to publish your guide that they will conform to League policies.

If the League is doing the printing, discuss with the printer such details as:

- Size of print
- Type of columns
- Possible use of photos
- Deadlines (and why they must be honored) especially for the finished copy; this should include proofreading time
- A cost estimate

Distribution

Local Leagues use a variety of ways to distribute information. The most costly is by direct mail, non-profit postage permit, to homes of every registered voter. Consult your County Board of Elections for registered voters list or mailing labels. The most common distribution method of printed copies is by placing sheets in libraries, town halls, banks, grocery stores, or any other areas of public access. However, putting the responses on your website is an extremely effective way to make sure the most voters have access to your Voters Guide.

REFERENCE I

DIGEST OF TITLE 19 ELECTION LAW

Registration N.J.S.A. 19:31 et. seq.

A person is eligible to register if one is a citizen of the United States, 18 years or older by the time of the next election, now resides in the district in which he/she intends to vote and will have lived 30 days in the county by the time of the next election. You are not eligible to register to vote if you have been adjudged mentally incompetent. You are not eligible to register if you are on parole, probation or serving a sentence for an indictable offense under state or federal law. You have the right to register upon completion of your sentence, parole or probation. N.J. Constitution Article II paragraph 3; 19: 4-1

In the 10 first class counties, an office of Superintendent of Elections is required, and the Superintendent is the commissioner of registration. In all other counties, the secretary of the county election board serves in this capacity. Each commissioner may deputize as many assistant registrars as he/she considers necessary.

Municipal clerks and/or their assistants are authorized to register voters.

Eligible persons may register in the office of the Commissioner of Registration or the municipal clerk, or by mail up to and including the 21st day prior to any election. Registration of voters will be accepted during the 20 days prior to an election, but the new registrant may not vote in the next election.

The Commissioner of Registration submits to the Secretary of State, by February 15, a plan for evening registration prior to the Primary Election, and by July 1, plans for evening and out-of-office registration for the General Election. Plans for out-of-office registration may include door-to-door or mobile registration.

Polling Places N.J.S.A. 19:8 et.seq.

At least one polling place must be provided for each election district. The clerk of each municipality furnishes a list of suggested places to the county board of elections, which prepares a certified list by April 1 of each year. Polling places need not be located within the district which they serve. The polling place for the district is indicated on the sample ballot sent to each voter before the election.

Procedures at the Polls

On Election Day, an American flag must be displayed outside the entrance to each polling place. No one may be present in a polling place except members of the election board, candidates, challengers and voters present for the purpose of voting. Electioneering (displaying campaign material or soliciting support for any candidate, party or public question) is not permitted within 100 feet of the entrance to the polling place. At closing time, voters waiting in line shall be permitted to vote. 19:15-9

Counting of votes shall be open and public. The record of votes shall be written on tally sheets by the clerk of the district election board and signed by all members. The results shall be publicly announced

Your Rights and Responsibilities at the Polls N.J.S.A. 19: 31A-8

Every person qualified to vote shall at any time after the opening of the polls be at liberty to enter and claim his/her right to vote in person before the district board (poll workers) in one's election district.

The voter shall give full name and address and shall sign the signature comparison record in the proper column. The board member in charge of the record shall compare the signatures. If the poll worker is satisfied they are made by one and the same person, the person shall be allowed to vote.

If the voter cannot sign his/her name, the voter establishes identity by responding to questions required upon registration. These questions are supplied by the commissioner of registration and are known as identification statements for election day.

If the voter needs assistance in casting his/her ballot—blind, physically disabled or cannot read—the voter is allowed to have someone of his/her choosing in the voting machine to assist. If alone and entitled to the assistance, two board workers of opposite political parties may help the voter. The voter has the choice of both workers or only one worker. A disability certificate must be filed by the district board workers.

No person who has a right to vote in any election shall be arrested by virtue of any civil complaint on the day on which such election is held. 19: 4-4

Right to Vote Challenged N.J.S.A. 19:15 et. seq.

The superintendent of election of the county prepares a challenge list of registered voters who are not eligible to vote.

A Voter whose name does not appear on the above list, but who is challenged as not entitled to vote by an authorized challenger or by a member of the district board of election is permitted to establish his/her right to vote by (1) signing an affidavit stating voter's qualifications and (2) presenting a suitable identifying document. The challenger must also sign an affidavit. The district board must vote on the challenge.

If the board workers vote to reject the challenge or if there is a tie vote on the challenge, the voter has the right to vote on the voting machine

If the board votes to uphold the challenge, the voter may not vote, but has the right to go to a Superior Court Judge sitting in the county seat on election day to present your case. If the judge agrees with you, you will be given a court order to vote.

Every challenge and its outcome must be recorded by the district board of election.

Challengers N.J.S.A. 19:7 et. seq.

The county chairman of each party may appoint two challengers to serve in each district, only one of whom (except in special circumstances) may serve at a time. A candidate may act as

challenger and may also appoint two challengers. Upon request, the county board of elections may appoint two challengers each to represent the proponents and opponents of any public question to be voted on in a district. Appointments must be made no later than the second Tuesday before the election

Challengers must be registered voters in the county. They have power to challenge the right to vote of anyone who presents himself or herself at the polls. They may be present when the ballots are counted and have power to challenge the count. All challengers must wear identification badges supplied by the county board of elections.

Mail-In Ballot Voting N.J.S.A. 19:63 et. seq.

The Vote by Mail Law signed June 2009 replaces previous absentee ballot laws.

Any qualified and registered voter of this State who wants to vote in any election using a mail-in ballot may do so. (C.19:63-2)

Applications for a mail-in ballot must be returned to the county clerk by mail no later than 7 days prior to an election. A voter who fails to meet the 7 day deadline may apply in person at the county clerk's office until 3 p.m. the day before the election to apply for a mail-in ballot. A voter who is a member of the armed forces of the United States may use a federal postcard application form to apply for a mail-in ballot. (C.19:63-3)

A voter who wishes to vote only by mail-in ballot in all future general elections in which the voter is eligible to vote, and who states that on an application for a mail-in ballot, shall be furnished such a ballot by the county clerk without further request on the part of the voter and until the voter requests that the voter no longer be sent a mail-in ballot. (C.19:63-3e)

In case of sickness or confinement a qualified voter may apply in writing for and obtain a mail-in ballot by authorized messenger. This individual is designated over the signature of the voter, and can be a family member or a registered voter in the county. The authorized messenger must show photo identification to the county clerk when submitting the application form. No candidates may serve as an authorized messenger. (C.19:63-4)

No one who has submitted a mail-in ballot will be permitted to vote at the polls. A person who applied for a mail-in ballot and has not received the ballot or a reason why not from the county board of elections shall be permitted to vote at the polls by provisional ballot. (C.19:63-20)

Provisional Ballot Voting N.J.S.A. 19:53C et. seq.

Provisional ballots are paper ballots used at the polls under the following circumstances:

- You are a registered voter who moved within the county and did not notify the county commissioner of registration of your new address. When going to the polling place assigned to your current address your registration information will not be in the poll book.
- Your registration information is incomplete in the poll book
- You did not provide the required personal identification information on your registration form or that information could not be matched.

If personal identification was missing, a voter has until the close of business on the second day after the election to provide the county commissioner of registration with the required ID.

Provisional ballots are not counted at the polling place. All provisional ballots are taken to the county commissioner of registration's office after the close of the polls. The board of elections is required to verify the voter is allowed to vote in that election district before the ballot is canvassed. If a provisional ballot is not counted because the board of elections ruled the individual was not registered, the provisional ballot will serve as a registration form.

After the election, voters can call 1-877-NJVOTER to find out if one's ballot was counted and if not, why not.

Emergency Ballot Voting N.J.S.A. 19: 53B et seq.

Emergency ballots are paper ballots used at the polling place if the voting machine is inoperable. The voter signs the poll book and voting authority and is then given the emergency ballot.

The emergency ballot is counted as long as proper marks are made in the squares provided and the total number voted for each office does not exceed the number of candidates to be elected.

Boards of Elections N.J.S.A. 19: 6 et.seq.

County boards of elections are responsible for conduct of elections. A board is composed of four legal voters, two from each of the two major political parties appointed by the Governor for two years from lists provided by the county chairmen of the two parties. In March of each year the board holds an organizational meeting and elects a chairman and a secretary who may not both be members of the same political party.

District boards of elections work at the polls on election days. Any voter who resides in the county and is a member of one of the two major political parties is eligible to serve on a district board of elections and may make written application to the county election board to do so. Four members (two from each party) for each district are appointed by the county election board for one-year terms beginning April 25. District board members need not live in the district to which they are assigned. Each district board meets on Tuesday two weeks prior to the Primary Election to choose a judge, a chairman, and an inspector. All proceedings of the board shall be open and public.

Violations of the Election Law N.J.S.A. 19: 34 et. seq.

- **Electioneering:** It is a crime under state law to electioneer within 100 feet from the outside entrance to the polling place up to and including the polling room. There can be no campaign signs or material in this area and no one can campaign on behalf of any candidate or public question to be voted upon.
- **Fraudulent voting:** It is a crime under federal and state law to attempt to vote or vote knowing you are not entitled to vote or to provide false information when registering to vote or voting. You are not permitted to vote more than once in an election.
- **Conspiracy:** It is a federal crime to conspire to deprive voters of a fair election.

REFERENCE II

Chronological Election Index

State and Federal Calendar

Each year the New Jersey Division of Elections publishes the *New Jersey Chronological Elections Guide*, a resource for information as well as a complete elections calendar with year specific dates for each requirement. It can be found in its entirety at <http://www.njelections.org/>.

There are over 200 dates found in Title 19 referenced as a number of days before an election. These statutory dates are for the following elections:

- Partisan State and Federal Elections: The primary election is the Tuesday after the first Monday in June. The general election is the Tuesday after the first Monday in November.
- Nonpartisan Municipal Elections: Held the second Tuesday in May in some municipalities
- School Board Elections: Some districts still hold this election on the third Tuesday in April. However, the majority of municipalities have opted to move their school board elections to the November general election.

Additional requirements of the Uniform Nonpartisan Elections Law can be found in N.J.S.A. 40:45-5.

The dates for each election are for registration, mail-in ballots, change of party, notice to voters, mailing of sample ballots, as well as dates referencing organization of the polling places and selection of poll workers, petition filing and challenging deadlines, recount and recheck of voting machines and certification of elections.

New Jersey has a number of school districts with different school board and budget procedures. There are Type I and Type II school districts (including regional districts), state-operated districts, county vocational districts, county special services districts and educational services commissions. Only in Type II districts do citizens elect school board members. Type II may present budgets to voters for approval or to a school board of estimate. The majority of districts are type II (there are 23 Type I school districts with appointed school boards).

The board of education of a type II district may call a special election usually related to bonding only on the fourth Tuesday in January, the second Tuesday in March, the last Tuesday in September or the second Tuesday in December.

SECTION III

ORGANIZING CANDIDATE FORUMS/DEBATES

INTRODUCTION

In carrying out our mission of encouraging informed and active participation in government, the League of Women Voters continues to be key sponsors of candidate debates and forums. The League of Women Voters enjoys a high level of public trust in this area. We have a reputation for organizing a fair, balanced forum for candidates, encouraging voter participation, and providing non-biased and skilled moderators to facilitate. Our image as a League is enhanced when we perform this public service competently.

The public does hold the League in high regard for our work on debates, so it is important for the local Leagues to follow best practices to ensure a fair and well executed debate or forum. This respected tradition also offers local Leagues wonderful opportunities to be visible with the public and to help strengthen the organization through inviting new members to join and developing new leaders.

The following information is provided to guide local Leagues as they plan and prepare to sponsor a debate or forum in any venue, e.g. traditional open meeting or studio taping format.

LEAGUE DEBATE GOALS

Goals for League sponsored debates

The goals for any League sponsored debate are to:

1. educate the public;
2. motivate voters to participate in the election; and
3. provide a venue for voters to hear the views of significant candidates.

Planning Considerations

With these goals in mind, to assist your Local League in making a determination to hold a Candidate Forum, ask your members to consider the following questions:

Will a forum help the voter to make choices?

- Is there a contest? (Between the parties, within a party as in a primary, among several candidates or independents)?
- Are there other opportunities to meet the candidates in a fair and nonpartisan setting?
- Will this give an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate skills for office (debating, thinking on one's feet) and to receive feedback from their constituents?

Does the community count on an annual League forum?

Will there be a worthwhile turnout?

- Can you anticipate community acceptance -- will they attend?
- Will the media provide coverage?
- Can arrangements be made for taping for public viewing?

Will you be able to pull it off?

- Do you have the time and the volunteers to do a good job?
- Are there other organizations with whom you can cooperate or co-sponsor?
- Are there special factors making it important to hold a forum despite anticipated difficulties?

Will sponsoring the forum favorably impact League membership and finance drives?

LEAGUE DEBATE CRITERIA

Criteria for Candidate Inclusion

Local Leagues make the determination as to which candidates will be included in the debates that they sponsor. Therefore, you must have a policy in place for including candidates in any forum or debate. The League may need to limit the number of candidates invited to a debate because of television and time constraints, etc. In those situations, please be sure to adopt specific debate criteria preceding the implementation of the debate. The following criteria apply:

- The candidate must meet the requirements of the New Jersey Constitution and the United States Constitution.
- The candidate must meet the legal requirements for inclusion on the ballot in accordance to state election laws.
- The candidate must have made a public announcement of his or her candidacy.
- The candidate must show evidence that a formal campaign is being waged, e.g., presence of headquarters (office, store-front or other publicly accessible site other than the candidate's personal residence), campaign telephone number, stationary and staff (e.g., campaign manager, treasurer, PR person), and campaign activity (e.g. website, scheduled campaign appearances, calendar of events which the candidate plans to attend).
- The candidate must demonstrate that there is voter interest and support for his/her candidacy. In assessing the significance of a candidacy, the League will require that either: (a) a candidate's party received at least 5% of the popular vote in the most recent general election; or (b) by September 15th (for a general election) a candidate's party has shown at least 15% support in a reputable statewide poll. The League may consider other factors as well.

For any election, the best practice is to include all of the candidates who have filed for a particular office and officially placed on the ballot. You can obtain the names and addresses of all the candidates through either the county board of elections or your municipal clerk's office.

Write-In candidates may be included in a League debate. A viable write-in candidate may be included in a debate if it advances the goals of the forum: to hear the views of significant

candidates and to inform the public. The League requires that they have met the above criteria; not only made a public announcement of their candidacy but that they have also organized a campaign and engaged in campaign activities. If you determine to include a write-in candidate in the debate, he/she will be treated the same as the other “on the ballot” candidates. It is important then to advise the other candidates of your intent so that they feel properly notified and prepared prior to the event.

Criteria for Co-Sponsors

It can be very advantageous for a local League to collaborate with the media, other local civic groups or organizations to co-sponsor a forum or debate. Those groups who share our interests in keeping the public informed can be positive allies. However, to collaborate and work with the League on a debate, an organization must agree to conduct their activities following our nonpartisan policy. To co-sponsor with the League the group must agree that they will make no endorsements of any candidate or party and further that they will not use any event materials generated in any political campaign or for an endorsement of any candidate or party.

Criteria for Moderators

The League has a reputation for providing non-biased and skilled moderators. Moderators are expected to keep the meeting under control, manage the discussion with a light hand, and maintain order. They may also work with the candidates and sponsoring organizations to develop the format of the forum. To be prepared for such a heavy responsibility, moderators must undergo training by qualified League trainers and be certified as a League Moderator.

To ensure that a forum is conducted in a non-partisan manner, the Moderator should not reside or vote in the community where the election is being held. While any member of the League can be a certified moderator, those who currently hold elected political office may not moderate candidate forums for elected political offices.

The LWVNJ regularly schedules Moderator Training workshops. Any member of the League can access the training to become a moderator. A local League may also contact the state office to request a moderator training session to develop interest and the skills of members.

FORUM ORGANIZATION

Protocol for Organizing LWVNJ Endorsed Debates

The LWVNJ is a resource to local Leagues and the public providing technical assistance, moderator services and validated information regarding debates and forums. Therefore, it is important that local Leagues, while planning, keep the LWVNJ office apprised. The current protocol in place is:

1. Set the preliminaries: type of debate, when, where, with whom, sponsoring organizations.
2. Request a moderator: an official contact person, usually the Voter Service chairperson, should contact the LWVNJ Office Manager (OM) (contact@lwvnj.org); or

609- 394-3303), provide the information about your proposed forum and request a Moderator. A fee will be charged for all non-League sponsored forums. (Appendix B)

3. LWVNJ assigns moderator: the OM has been assigned to assist LL in obtaining the services of one of our League-trained moderators. The OM may also assign moderators to consult and assist outside agencies. She knows which moderators are already scheduled and is adept at finding certified LWV moderators for forums. When a moderator agrees to accept the assignment, the OM makes contact with the sponsoring organization to inform them. At that time she provides information so that the LL can connect with the moderator.

4. The LL and the moderator communicate to collaborate on the details of format and conduct of the debate.

5. Follow-up: after the forum inform the state office about the forum including its successes and any areas of concern, (Appendix J). Celebrate! If you have photos or news clips share them with the LWVNJ office for possible inclusion in the *NJVoter*.

STRUCTURING A LEAGUE FORUM OR DEBATE

It is essential to organize and structure a debate or forum carefully. We must ensure that our efforts are nonpartisan, guided by good practice and follow established regulations. All Leagues bear the responsibility of safeguarding our nonpartisan policy and protecting the organization's nonpartisan reputation. It is wise to be aware of and guard against the misuse of the League's name and nonpartisan services with proactive, preventative interventions.

Regulatory Framework

In organizing a candidates forum, all League activity is based on our nonpartisan policy. Additionally, we are guided by debate rulings of key federal regulatory agencies, among them: the Federal Election Commission (FEC) which regulates the conduct of organizations in federal elections; the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which regulates radio, TV and cable broadcasters; and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) which prohibits involvement of tax-exempt organization in political campaigns.

According to the FEC a debate: is an event that includes at least two candidates; is staged in a way that does not promote or advance one candidate over another; and allows the candidates to appear concurrently in face-to-face confrontations, with opportunities to respond to each other. This FEC definition is consistent with the League's nonpartisan policy and thus provides a sound basis for structuring League organization activities.

To ensure that all forums are nonpartisan, equitable, and balanced as well as informative, the League has traditionally mandated openly setting appropriate limits and communicating those parameters to participants. In particular, a League sponsored debate always includes a structured, timed format, monitoring by timekeepers, and oversight and direction by an impartial moderator.

Prior to the event, rules regarding the conduct of the meeting and use of materials for rebroadcast and publication are shared with and agreed to by all the participants. It continues to be League practice to identify areas that require limit-setting and propose an appropriate means to do so.

A recent issue to be addressed is the use of readily available remote, cell phones, video cameras and recording devices by some audience members during the forum. It is a serious distraction for all of the participants as well as other audience members. Further, to avoid the misuse of debate generated material, there is a need to officially inform and advise both participants and audience members that there is no authorization for anyone to use the League name and/or logo, or to use footage from the debate in campaign materials, literature or advertising.

When structuring any debate or forum these two issues should be addressed:

First, include in the letter of invitation to the candidate, a paragraph asking for his/her agreement regarding videotaping and subsequent use of materials. In effect, the candidates are charged with monitoring their own campaign practices. (For wording, see Appendix D for sample letter to candidate). Follow up by obtaining a signed agreement at the event, if the event is being videotaped (Appendix E). (Also, see Invite Candidates below.)

Second, in the opening remarks at the outset of each forum, include three notification statements: The LWV is a nonpartisan organization; the use of the League name is not authorized; and a request to turn off electronic devices. (For wording, see Appendix I, a sample opening script). Who and how to implement this is discussed below in, “Finalizing the Agenda”.

Determine Format

Structuring a League forum starts with format. Outline your forum format prior to officially inviting the candidates as it will serve as the basis for any discussion and decision making on the part of the candidates and other participants. In consultation with the moderator, candidates and/or TV staff you can modify the format as needed so long as everyone is consulted and informed of the changes.

Your choice of format will depend on many factors: the local League’s past practice and experience; the nature of the election; the number of candidates expected to participate; community/campaign climate; time and technical constraints of broadcasters; and the wishes of the candidates.

Time constraints: allocate the time you have available so that each candidate will have an equal opportunity to speak and present their positions. Emphasize the question/response component. Ensure that there will be time for candidate responses to at least 6 issue questions from the audience. There should be an opportunity for every candidate to respond to each issue and, best practice, to give each candidate a 30 second rebuttal if needed.

Carefully consider the time allocated to opening and closing statements. 2 minutes is an adequate amount of time for a candidate to introduce him/herself and state a platform. Allow 1 to 2 minutes for each candidate to sum up and close. 3 minutes may be desirable for either opening or closing only when it is limited to two to four candidates. Candidates have been known to ask for 5 or 10 minutes to open; however, that is a panel presentation rather than debate format.

You and your moderator may have to be creative for some elections where there are several viable candidates, e.g. twelve candidates for four positions on the BOE. Consult with the League office or more experienced moderators as there are alternatives. For example, it’s possible to divide candidates into groups and alternate questions by group. See Section IV which provides an in-depth discussion of forum formats from which to choose.

Invite Candidates

Officially invite the candidates to participate well in advance of the forum while their calendar is flexible so that they are able to make the time commitment. A letter of invitation to a candidate should include (see sample, Appendix D):

- Date, time, and location of forum
- Format with rebuttal provisions and time keeping arrangements
- Inclusion of questions, from audience and/or debate sponsor
- Moderator information

- Ground rules and an agreement regarding use of videotaped materials
- Provisions for candidate literature
- Request for confirmation by a date given with contact's name and numbers.

It is advisable to send the letter by Certified Mail, return receipt requested for documentation; and by regular USPS which ensures delivery even if they refuse to sign the receipt.

It is wise for the contact person to follow-up with a call to the candidate (or their office aides) to acknowledge their confirmation, thank them and offer to answer any questions. Inquire as to whether they can be available just prior to the start and for a short time after the event for photo ops and news interviews.

A subsequent letter should be sent thanking them for their participation and suggesting that they arrive to the forum at an earlier time to meet with the moderator and TV staff to go over arrangements. Also include in the letter: a copy of the finalized agenda; if agreed upon, a copy of the prepared questions and use instructions; and a copy of the Candidates' Agreement (Appendix E) for their review noting that they will be asked to sign the agreement just prior to the event. Copy the moderator on all candidate communications including e-mail.

Collaborate with Media

Contact the cable/TV provider in the early stages of planning a forum. See Section IV, "Television", for necessary background information. To achieve the goals of the debate requires active discussion to accommodate the needs of the sponsor and candidates to those time and technical constraints of the cable providers.

Enter into an agreement with them on rebroadcast rights and responsibilities: that the videotape will be shown in its entirety with no edits; and that the candidates will be notified by the League not to use any clips of the taped forum in campaign advertising or materials.

Include the cable provider in the development of the forum format. Appreciate that any change affects their service. Ensure that they are notified and kept apprised throughout the planning. Include them in finalizing the agenda; it is particularly important for the camera operators to have the time structured agenda in order with the names of all of the speakers.

For the night of the event, assign a cable liaison to be available to troubleshoot between cameras and the podium.

Before the start of the forum, arrange for the moderator, candidates and speakers to meet with the cable staff so that they can provide instructions and coordinate cueing.

Contact the local news media with PR blurbs when you have formalized the date and format of the forum (see sample, Appendix K). Keep them apprised of the candidates' involvement. They can be a source of good questions to be posed; perhaps facilitate voter questioning. Arrange with the candidates to meet with the news media for photographs before the event and interviews immediately following.

Manage Questions

Ensure that the forum is informative with a range of probing issue-related questions. Questions may come from several sources: the local League or sponsor, the media itself or voters via the media, a nonpartisan panel, or the forum audience. Potentially, questions from voters can range from explosive local issues to trivial private concerns. The task is to reduce those to a few focused questions, on topics that concern the community and are appropriate for the specific candidates to discuss. From whatever the source, the moderator will pose the questions and alternate candidate responses, so who frames the questions and how they are collected and screened must be determined.

Framing Questions

The local League and co-sponsoring organizations should develop a basic list of 10 questions, carefully framing them to clearly state the issue in question and ask for a response all in a non-personalized and nonpartisan manner. They should address only those issues within the jurisdiction that the candidates will be expected to vote upon if elected. This basic pool of questions serves as a model and backup. It can be used in total for random drawing of questions or from it can be drawn 2 or 3 prepared questions.

Consider developing League/sponsor prepared questions. Candidates at every level are concerned about fielding questions. They want to put their best foot forward; to respond with information and answers and to not feel blind-sided. Providing them in advance with two or three questions for which they can prepare gives them all a positive advantage to start the questioning. They then are better able to field audience questions. In addition it ensures that the most significant issues do get addressed.

For a debate where there is no audience participation consider using a panel (3) of media staff or nonpartisan civic persons with proven reliability to frame and ask questions for a formal video production or studio debate.

Audience questions can be written on cards or verbal using a microphone. Before the questioning commences, the floor rules must be carefully communicated, preferably available in written form as well as spoken by the moderator. (See Appendix H, sample of Audience Participation Rules and Appendix G, Agenda Format). If a screening committee is sorting the questions on cards for redundancy (to assist the moderator), the audience should be so apprised.

For spoken questions: the audience needs to understand the procedure: to step to the mic and identify themselves; to know the limits, not make a speech, just pose a question and that the moderator has the authority to rule out any statement if redundant, inappropriate, abusive or inflammatory. In effect the moderator does all of the screening.

For written questions: have cards, pencils and people available as the audience arrives to the forum; provide guidance and encourage their thoughtful participation. Have people in place with a system for collecting the questions and handing them off to the screening committee or directly to the moderator.

Screening Questions

A Screening Committee (2 or 3 seasoned members) can be most helpful to a moderator. Seat

them near the moderator, but not in the direct view of the audience or candidates, rather aside where their activity will not distract. The question cards can be given to them. They then sort the questions by topic; choose or combine best question on each topic; clarify abbreviations or phrases unique to the area; discard personal or abusive language; identify off topic; and then hand the questions to the moderator as quickly as possible.

Finalize the Agenda

Producing a forum is complex and involves the informed participation of many people within a delimited time frame. To ensure that everyone knows what they are expected to do and when, it is wise to draw up a timed agenda and distribute it to all participants two weeks prior to the event. The agenda becomes the shared working tool for organizers, candidates, moderator, and cable staff. It should include: identifying information at the top; the sequence of activities listed within time slots; correctly spelled names identifying each speaker for each activity; the names of the candidates, party if applicable, and seat for which they are contending; voting information e.g. vote for one where two or three candidates are listed; format listed, noting response times for questions, rebuttal and use of time keeper (with names). (See Appendix G, sample of Agenda Format)

Assign and Document Responsibilities

Set a positive climate at the opening, develop a script and agree to share responsibility with co-sponsors for delivering the messages that must be delivered. Clearly define who does each part. It is helpful to have the full, prepared script with assigned speaker names available at the event, for the TV cameramen, and in case someone forgets to bring their assignment. (See sample of script for Opening Remarks, Appendix I.)

Opening Duties: One sponsor official should identify themselves and welcome everyone to the event, then introduce the group that presents the Colors (or other opener).

A League host, president or voter service chair, should do the opening remarks section. There are three required statements that are best conveyed by a League member in the opening remarks: the LWV is a nonpartisan organization; the use of the League name is not authorized; and a request to turn off electronic devices. In addition, it is good practice for the Local League to: note election activities and services in which they have been engaged, identify election information and materials they have made available, and promote LWV membership. Following the opening remarks, the League host introduces the moderator.

An organization other than the League may sponsor a debate and request the services of a League Moderator. In that situation, the sponsor host is best advised to do the welcome, call the group for the Salute then introduce the moderator. The League moderator would then do all of the opening remarks, setting the League limits and defining the rules for the forum.

The moderator usually introduces the candidates, reviews the format, identifies the timekeepers, and goes over the floor rules for the audience prior to commencing the candidates opening statements.

Closing: A sponsor host should make closing announcements; specifically thank the candidates,

the cable station and staff, the moderator, and venue staff; thank all of the people who helped to make it happen. Conclude with a statement reminding the audience, they have heard the candidates' positions, now it's their responsibility to get out and vote on November __.

Address Candidate Negative/No Response or Cancellation

It may be that of the several candidates invited to a debate, one candidate is forced to cancel. The League practice is that the candidate may submit a statement which the moderator will read, usually at the time of the candidate opening remarks. No person or surrogate will be allowed to substitute for the candidate.

It sometimes happens that only one candidate in a contested election accepts a debate invitation or that a candidate cancels after having agreed to participate, leaving only one participant. If only one candidate accepts the invitation, there can be no debate as defined by the FEC, so the debate should be cancelled. However, if there are three or more candidates vying for the same seat and at least two accept the invitation, that constitutes a contest, making it appropriate to go forward with the debate.

Likewise, in a contested election with several seats with candidates from two parties only, if only the candidates of one party accept the invitation, there can be no debate so it should be cancelled.

Should a candidate fail to appear or to back out at the last minute leaving just one candidate at an event, you may **not** proceed with what is often called an "empty chair" debate. Rather, in consultation with your moderator, you will need to consider how to proceed. You may feel the need to respect the time and effort of those who in good faith have gathered at the meeting, so you might suggest an alternative, Meet and Greet. However, since neither a local League nor a League moderator may conduct a meeting or facilitate any discussion with just one candidate in an election, the League would need to withdraw as host. Some other group and/or facilitator present would have to assume the responsibility to go forward with such a non debate meeting.

FORUM ORGANIZATION CHECKLIST (See form, Appendix C)

Preliminary Planning

1. Local LWV determines to sponsor forum; done 4 or 5 months prior to election.
2. Make informal contacts to assess interest and determine appropriate dates.
Congressional/Legislative forums require contacting other LWV and/or civic groups in the district to coordinate activities.
3. Identify appropriate site(s) and co-sponsors.
4. Define/limit the offices to be included in the forum. It is not advisable to include too many offices at any one forum. Contests at different levels e.g. legislative, freeholder, and municipal are better served with different forums for each level or district.

Voters Service Committee Responsibilities

1. Determines a mutually agreed upon date; seek L.L. Board authorization to move ahead.
2. Contacts site and formally reserves the space; they may require proof of insurance; if

- needed, contact the state office for assistance.
3. Determine the format for the forum (Appendix H)(see Section IV for various formats).
 4. Contact local cable TV for coverage.
 - a. Send them a draft copy of format.
 - b. Discuss and define limits in structure and format
 - c. Define and agree on rebroadcast restraints.
 5. Request a Moderator; contact LWVNJ office.
 - a. Provide information: type of forum, date, time, place, sponsor and co-sponsor name, contact person name, phone and e-mail numbers.
 - b. When assigned, contact Moderator by phone/e-mail;
 - c. Send letter of confirmation with copies of candidate letter and format.
 - d. Actively communicate and consult on matters of format and structure.
 6. Ascertain names and address of the candidates for office from an official source, either Municipal Clerk or Office of the County Clerk or NJ DOE.
 7. Research and prepare background information regarding the elected office: Official name, length of term, salary, unexpired term if any, duties if not obvious.
 8. Send a letter of invitation to participate to the candidates; certified and regular mail, (Appendix D), include the Agenda copy of the format if available. Send copies to cable and moderator.
 9. Prepare public relations blurb; distribute to media in area (see sample Appendix E).
 10. Develop Questions (with input from co-sponsors, and LWV members).
 - a. Agree on 2 or 3 Prepared Questions; save others for backup.
 - b. Send follow-up letter including the Prepared Questions to candidates; include a copy of the Agenda Format, (Appendix I); and a copy of the League and Candidate Agreement (Appendix E); again certified and regular mail.

Responsibilities of Sponsoring Organization-Assign Duties

1. Voters Service chair assumes overall administration. Prior to the forum delegate an individual to:
 - a. Liaison with cable personnel.
 - b. Designate the one(s) to open, welcome, do flag, introduce moderator.
 - c. Prepare the script(s); advise/copy the cable personnel.
 - d. Assign two timekeepers; have available stopwatch and time cards.
 - e. Provide for distribution of agenda format, copying and handing out at forum.
2. For the day of the forum delegate someone to:
 - a. Open; greet candidates and moderator; greet attendees and ask if they want to be on your LWV Contact List.
 - b. Set up a table outside the auditorium for display of campaign literature, election information, and League membership information.
 - c. Oversee speakers/mic set up: mics in place for candidates and moderator;
 - d. LWV/co-sponsor banners in place;
 - e. Have name cards prepared and ready to place; water for participants.
 - f. Bring question cards and pencils, ensure they are available for attendees;
 - j. Designate the people who are to pick up the question cards from attendees; and
 - k. Designate who will do a preliminary review and sort of Q.C.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CONDUCT OF THE EVENT

1. Sponsor makes the Introduction:

- Local League president (or share the responsibility with the co-sponsor) should open the meeting. You may start with a Flag Salute done by Scouts or official civic group to set a positive tone.
- Follow with a welcome, the reason for the meeting and a statement of the League's nonpartisanship.
- You may want to bring attention to important voting information that has been made available and then make the ASK for membership.
- Use the sample script to notify participants and the public that use of the League name or any footage from this debate has not been authorized; and request that all electronic devices be turned off.
- Finally, the sponsor introduces the moderator by name and League affiliation and turns the meeting over to the moderator. (See Appendix I for sample script)

2. Moderator establishes the structure:

- States purpose of meeting – to learn the position of the candidates on the issues
- States goal – to facilitate exchange of ideas about the issues
- Introduces the candidates
- Reviews format and rules for candidates and attendees; states time the meeting will end.
- Introduces timekeepers and explain procedures
- Reminds everyone that questions or comments dealing with personalities will be ruled out of order.

The Moderator conducts the meeting:

- in accordance with the rules in a friendly, fair and courteous manner;
- is guided by a sense of fairness and humor if an unexpected request or situation arises;
- poses questions, rotates the candidate responses, and listens to the candidates;
- keeps track of the time and TV signals;
- pays close attention to time keepers, while keeping an eye on the audience; and
- sets limits. The Moderator may interrupt a candidate or questioner who is speaking, but only if the remarks constitute a personal attack or if candidate has ignored the timekeeper.

3. Candidates contribute and share on issues. Candidates are expected to:

- have reviewed and acquainted themselves and their staff with the materials sent beforehand outlining the forum procedures;
- arrive early and meet with sponsor, TV production staff, and the moderator;
- enter into an agreement with the sponsor and other candidates to honor forum procedures;
- recognize the moderator as the presiding official;
- be guided by the established rules and time constraints;
- respectfully address issues not personalities; and
- attempt to identify voter concerns and answer their questions.

4. **Audience Participation** (See Appendix H, sample of Audience Participation Floor Rules)

Audience participation is enhanced when the sponsor and moderator arrange for and structure audience input:

- Decide beforehand if questions will be written or spoken;
- Remind audience that questions must pertain to the issues, and questions and remarks of a personal nature will be not be permitted;
- If questions are written, arrange for a local representative of sponsoring group to screen them if possible;
- Inform audience that questions will be edited if repetitious;
- Ask audience members to identify themselves as residents;
- If a question is spoken, repeat it to everyone.

The audience then can be expected to contribute in a positive, civil manner following the rules as laid out.

SECTION IV

SELECTING A FORMAT

Whether very rigid or free-flowing, the format provides a framework for the content of your debate. The term “format” is usually applied to that part of the debate that includes the questions to candidates and their responses. However, other debate elements such as introductions, candidates’ opening and closing statements and any explanatory material also must be carefully considered.

A good format can make the difference between an interesting, informative debate and one that is dull or obscures the candidates’ differences on issues. The format may also determine whether a debate truly offers equal opportunities for the candidates to present their positions. Otherwise, a format may favor one candidate over others or make all the candidates appear weak.

Critiques of debates often focus on the format. Some critics will condemn any departure from the “classic debate” or the panel/question-answer-rebuttal formula. Others consistently fault debate formats as too formal, stodgy and dull.

Format is more likely to be subject to tough negotiations than other debate issues. Candidates seek formats that will play up their strengths and present no surprises or risks; some broadcasters want formats that promise “good television” – lively, contentious and unpredictable – and some prefer the “tried and true.”

In designing a debate format, it is essential to provide for spontaneous interaction between candidates. Consecutive presentations by candidates, press conferences or interview programs are not debates.

Leagues have used a number of debate formats alone or in combination, with varying degrees of success. The choice depends on your League’s debate goals and on external circumstances. The best choice is often a combination of different formats.

No matter which format is selected, the length should be no more than two hours; one and one-half hours is preferable.

Debate Requirements

Formats must:

- be fair, impartial and nonpartisan
- provide an equal opportunity for each candidate to address the issues
- give each candidate, at least roughly, equal time to speak
- allow and encourage candidates to respond to each other’s remark
- include discussion of a wide range of specific campaign issues

- encourage candidates to answer questions fully and directly and prevent them from evading or dodging questions
- keep the moderator (as the League's representative) rather than the candidates, in control of the debate
- provide information that is helpful to voters and that will enable them to hold the winner of the election accountable
- be sufficiently interesting and informative to attract and hold an audience

Other Considerations

The debate format should be flexible enough to accommodate the unexpected, without breaking down into chaos and confusion. In large part, it is the responsibility of the moderator and/or producer to ensure that the format works as intended. However, overly rigid timing requirements or complex rules will make it difficult, if not impossible, to respond to the unexpected.

The debate format should keep the spotlight on the candidates and not distract from the discussion of issues. For example, a debate format should not require a lengthy introduction by the moderator in order to make sense to the audience. It should be easily understood and followed by all participants. Moderators, panelists or questioners from the audience should not be able to "grandstand" or take up large blocks of time with self-serving questions that verge on speeches.

The choice of format will depend on many different external factors, particularly the wishes or demands of candidates and/or broadcasters. Other factors include the following:

- The nature of the election – general or primary, level of office, single-member or multi-member districts, etc.
- The number of candidates participating
- The campaign climate – confrontational, hostile, noncompetitive, one-issue, party-line, coat-tail, etc.
- The campaign style of the candidates – set speeches, improvisational, sloganeering, characterized by personal attacks, thoughtful discussion of issues, rallying the faithful, etc.
- The broadcast medium – commercial television, public television, cable, radio-or none
- The on-site audience – small, primarily candidate supporters and League members, invited VIPs, many students, large and diverse, etc.
- Moderator and/or panel characteristics and style
- Technical possibilities – remote broadcast, phone-in, taped or remote questions, etc.

- Location – size of the hall or studio, dimension of the stage, etc.

For example, formats suitable for a general election contest involving two contenders may be disastrous for a primary debate with three or more participants. An interactive format can highlight the differences between two “look-alike” candidates, while a more structured format is a good tool to force candidates in a “mud-slinging” contest to stick to the issues. The following discussion of formats includes the advantages and disadvantages of each under various circumstances.

Which Format Serves Voters?

1. Traditional or Formal

Participants make statements for or against predetermined “propositions,” followed by rebuttals and sometimes, counter rebuttals and closing statements.

Traditional or Formal Sample Timing for Two Candidates

Proposition #1 is read – Opening Statements	4 min each
Rebuttal #1	3 min each
Rebuttal #2	3 min each
Proposition #2 is read – Opening Statements	4 min each
Rebuttal #1	3 min each
Rebuttal #2	3 min each
Proposition #3 is read – Opening Statements	4 min each
Rebuttal #1	3 min each
Rebuttal #2	3 min each
Closing Statements	3 min each
Total time	66 minutes

This format is not often used for candidate debates because it severely limits the number of issues discussed and encourages memorized or “canned” statements. The “pro and con” formula does not encourage discussion of areas of agreement between candidates or allow for gradations of opinion. However, the traditional rebuttal – one debater’s response to the opponent’s statements – is an effective interactive device that is often incorporated into the formats.

Variations

- A) In a gubernatorial debate, each of the three participants submitted three “propositions” in advance. The League selected one proposition from each candidate for the content of the debate.
- B) Oregon-style (developed at the University of Oregon)--the participants question each other after the opening statements and the rebuttals.

Oregon-Style Sample Timing for Two Candidates

Opening Statements	3 min each
Rebuttal #1	2 min each
Rebuttal #2	2 min each
Candidate A Question	½ min
Candidate B Answer	2 min
Candidate B Question	½ min
Candidate A Answer	2 min
Closing Statements	2 min each
Total time	23 minutes

The term “Oregon-style” has been applied to any debate in which candidates question each other. It is now more commonly referred to as ‘crosstalk’ and is often used for a segment of a debate and rarely for an entire debate (see below for further discussion of crosstalk).

2. Question-and-Answer with Timed Responses

This format, with its variations, is the most commonly used for candidates debates. Sponsors, candidates and broadcasters often look no further than this option. However, as more varied and lively formats become familiar, they are likely to be used more frequently, alone or in combination with this “classic” debate format.

Under the format, questions may be asked by a panel or by a moderator. The League may select the questions in advance or give the moderator/panel discretion to originate questions either within certain issue areas, within guidelines or with no limits.

Each candidate may be expected to answer each question, or different questions may be directed specific candidates. Asking each candidate the same question prevents charges of bias and gives every candidate the opportunity to speak on all the issues raised for the same amount of time. Each issue can be discussed at length. However, if there are more than two or three candidates, asking each one the same question can become repetitious and boring. Especially in a primary

race or any election in which there is minimal disagreement among candidates, such a debate format can be very tedious as candidates either echo the statements of the others or struggle to say something new.

Sample Timed-Questions-and-Answers Format Segment

A. Same question to every candidate

Question #1 to Candidate A	½ min
Candidate A answers	1 min
Question #1 to Candidate B	½ min
Candidate B answers	1 min
Questions #1 to Candidate C	½ min
Candidate C answers	1 min

B. Different Questions for Each Candidate

Question #1 to Candidate A	½ min
Candidate A answers	1 min
Questions #2 to Candidate B	½ min
Candidate B answers	1 min
Question #3 to Candidate C	½ min
Candidate C answers	1 min

Candidates, especially incumbents or frontrunners, often prefer this debate format because it is relatively predictable. As veterans of press conferences, they are skilled at anticipating questions and preparing answers and can usually avoid making costly mistakes. Leagues and broadcasters also like the exact timing of the standard format because it facilitates debate production. However, in its pure form, this standard format presents *few* opportunities for candidates to respond to one another--and none at all if the candidates each answer different questions.

Variations

There are many variants of this standard format that encourage more probing questions and more candidate interchange. Of course, the trade-off for a more flexible format is less predictability in timing and subject matter and greater need for a skillful moderator.

Consider the following options to include in a timed question-and-answer format:

- Follow-up questions to permit the moderator or panelist to probe for a complete answer or a non-evasive response. Follow-up questions should be derived from the candidate's response to the original question and should not be prepared in advance of the debate. Moderators or panelists may choose not to follow up after some responses if it seems unnecessary or inappropriate.
- An opportunity for candidates to ask each other follow-up questions derived from the opponent's responses.

Timed Questions-and-Answers Format with Follow-up Questions

Question #1 to Candidate A	½ min
Candidate A responds	1 min
Follow-up question to Candidate A	½ min
Candidate A responds	¾ min
Question #1 to Candidate B	½ min
Candidate B responds	1 min
Follow-up questions to Candidate B	½ min
Candidate B responds	¾ min

- Rebuttals allow candidates to respond to their opponent's remarks. Rebuttals can be scheduled into the debate or be left to the discretion of the moderator. Rebuttals can be used in a multi-candidate debate if they are optional and if the moderator controls for repetition and gives each candidate an equal opportunity or participate.
- "Jumpball" questions allow each candidate to answer the question. This technique of "putting the question up for grabs" helps keep the discussion going in a multi-candidate debate, since candidates have the option of using their allotted time, briefly indicating agreement or disagreement, or choosing not to answer. The moderator may solicit participation from some candidates to keep other candidates from dominating the debate. However, since "equal opportunity" is more important than "equal time," reluctant candidates need not be pushed to participate. The opportunity for candidates to rebut or ask follow-up questions may also be "put up for grabs."

Timing the Questions-and-Answer Format

Determining how much time to allot for questions, answers, follow-up questions, rebuttals, crosstalk, etc. will depend on many of the same considerations that determine the format. More time is usually allowed for the original question and answer in a segment than for follow-ups or rebuttals (see samples).

Candidates will negotiate for response times that best suit their own style – direct and to the point versus discursive, quick statements of position versus discussion of all aspects of the issue. Short response times allow more issues to be aired, while longer times allow more in-depth discussion. However, long answers can become boring or overly technical. Your League may decide to vary the response or question time depending on the complexity of the issues being addressed. For issues such as taxes or funding for public education, for example, the League may allot more question time to provide some background information so that the audience can better understand the implications of the candidates' answers. Explanations cannot become lectures, however, or take too much time and attention away from the debates.

Ground Rules for Timing

The ground rules for timing a question-and-answer format should be decided in advance and clearly understood by all the participants. They include the following.

- An unobtrusive method for alerting the candidates that they have only a short time left or that their time is up. A loud bell or announcement from the moderator interrupts the flow of the candidates' answers, increases the candidates' anxiety and creates a game show atmosphere. Work out a system of cards or subtle signals and be sure to test it for effectiveness before the debate begins.
- What a candidate may say after the allotted time is up. May a candidate finish a sentence, a phrase or a thought? There should be agreement that the moderator should not interrupt a candidate in mid-sentence unless absolutely necessary.

3. Loose Question-and-Answer/Crosstalk Format

In this format, the moderator (or rarely, a panelist) poses a question and guides the candidates in a discussion that can include candidate questions, responses, rebuttals and follow-up questions with no firm time limits. A variation involves keeping track of the accumulated time as each candidate uses it. As in all loosely timed formats, the moderator is responsible for seeing that each candidate has an equal opportunity to respond to questions.

A crosstalk format requires a moderator who is strong enough to keep control and skilled enough to keep the discussion moving and on track. At the same time, the moderator must make sure that each candidate gets an equal opportunity to address each issue. To work well, this kind of format also requires articulate, astute and confident candidates. Optimally, an open format makes it possible to continue a good informative discussion or curtail discussion that is repetitive and non-productive.

In a crosstalk format, the moderator can probe for definitive answers, redirect questions to other candidates or ask for short responses followed by explanations. An alert moderator can explore new issues as they come up in the discussion. Candidates have the opportunity to explain their opponents' charges. With articulate candidates, interesting issues and a good moderator, the result is a lively, fast-moving debate, especially effective on cable and television.

The crosstalk format has risks as well as advantages for everyone involved. The candidates may take control of the debate, leaving important issues unaddressed. The debate may degenerate into an exchange of charges and countercharges or even a shouting match. One or another of the candidates may dominate the debate or end up being bullied.

Ground rules are especially important in controlling this kind of format. The candidate must accept the moderator's authority to break into a discussion or to redirect the questioning. Candidates should not be able to change the subject unilaterally or introduce extraneous issues.

Loose Question-and-Answer/Crosstalk
Sample Timing

Moderator intro segment	½ min
Moderator asks questions	½ min
Moderator and Candidates Crosstalk	5 min

4. Cross Questioning

At its best, this kind of format, where candidates ask each other questions, can be lively, entertaining and informative. It allows the candidates to set the agenda and raise the issues they believe are most important and revealing. The audience can evaluate the candidates by the questions they ask, as well as by the responses they give; and voters can gain insight into such character traits as fairness, aggressiveness, originality and ability to plan and to act strategically.

The danger for the sponsor is that the candidates control the debate and can avoid bringing up certain issues, pose questions in the form of long speeches or focus on personality, trivialities or mud slinging. Candidates may back off from being put on the defensive by opponents or fear they will come off as either too hostile or too compliant.

The ground rules can require that questions either be prepared in advance or arise spontaneously out of the discussion. Questions may be revealed in advance to the other candidates or to the audience, or they may be sprung as a surprise; questions can be asked directly by each candidate or prepared by the candidate and asked by the moderator. The issues areas may be predetermined or unrestricted.

The moderator serves as a referee in this kind of format, enforcing the rules and keeping the discussion on track. With a strong and effective moderator and well-designed ground rules, cross questioning may work very well, especially as one segment of a debate. For example, cross questioning may serve as an effective preface to a more conventional panel or moderator question-and-answer debate segment. The panel/moderator can then probe or follow up on issues raised during cross questioning.

Cross Questioning by Candidates
Sample Timing for Two Candidates

Moderator intro to segment	½ min
Candidate A poses question to Candidate B	½ min
Candidate B responds	1 ½ min
Candidate B poses question to Candidate A	½ min
Candidate A responds	1 ½ min

5. Questions from the Audience

This debate format is often called a “forum.” It consists of short presentations by each candidate followed by responses to questions raised by an on-site audience. The forum format has often been used by Leagues for candidate events that include many candidates (usually for local office), that are not broadcast and that include several different contests in one evening. This “town meeting” approach has the advantages of being lively and spontaneous, raising issues of most interest to those who are present and emphasizing the Leagues commitment to citizen participation.

Be aware that this format does not work as well in a broadcast debate. Since there may be only a few people in the audience and many of them may be associated with either the candidates or the League, it is difficult to ensure that all the important issues are raised or that each candidate gets an equal opportunity to respond. Opposing candidates may “plant” difficult or embarrassing questions in the audience. Questioners may use their air-time to draw attention to themselves or their causes. Locating questioners and bringing them to a microphone can be distracting and time-consuming.

However, audience questions can be used effectively for one segment of a broadcast debate (usually just before closing statements). The following circumstances contribute to the success of an audience participation segment.

- The on-site audience should be large and fairly representative.
- Before the debate begins, members of the audience should be asked to submit written questions. The audience should be given some guidance on the subject matter of questions (i.e. confined to issues germane to the office sought, issues of local scope, issues as opposed to personal attacks, etc.).
- Questions should be written on cards and then screened to prevent repetition, to select issues of interest and to make sure that each candidate gets approximately the same number of questions.
- Questions should be subject to reasonable time limits.

- Those whose questions are selected can be notified early in the debate and be standing, in order, at a floor microphone in time for the audience questions segment; or questions submitted by the audience can be asked by the moderator.

Sample Audience Questions-and-Answer Format Segment
Same question to every candidate – generally asked by moderator
Sequence of candidates answering changes with each question

Opening Statements from candidates	1 – 2 min each depending on number of candidates
Question 1	½ minute max
Candidate A answers	1 min
Candidate B answers	1 min
Candidate C answers	1 min
etc.	
Followup allowed	½ minute per candidate
Question 2	½ minute max
Candidate B answers	1 min
Candidate C answers	1 min
Candidate A answers	1 min
etc.	
Followup allowed	½ minute per candidate
Question 3	½ minute max
Candidate C answers	1 min
Candidate A answers	1 min
Candidate B answers	1 min
etc.	
Followup allowed	½ minute per candidate

Once time limit is being approached assure audience members that the candidates will be happy to answer any further questions they may have one-on-one immediately at the close. Then have closing statements and wrap it up.

Variations

Questions may be phoned in or broadcast in from a remote viewing site, using a split screen or monitor. Questions may be solicited in advance from League members or from the general public. Questions from “person-on-the-street” can be filmed and shown during the debate. Selected questioners can be taped, and the video or audio tapes broadcast as part of the debate program.

ROLES FOR PRESIDERS

At the Podium, Who's the Boss?

A successful Candidates Forum requires good leadership at the podium. Various formats and audiences require various leadership skills. The Voters Service director and her/his committee should analyze the requirements of their planned forum and match a moderator with the appropriate skills, wherever possible. A large, unruly audience will require a more authoritarian figure than a small group of friendly neighbors. A televised presentation will make stressful demands on the moderator, who will be better able to cope if she has had this type of experience, and so on. In addition, while the debate format requires a moderator, the roundtable format is conducted by a discussion leader, and when the League provides help to other organizations, or organizes a meeting to discuss community issues, sometimes a facilitator is called for. Here is a review of these various roles:

MODERATOR: The moderator is essentially a manager. Her/his purpose is to ensure equal time for the issues and/or the candidates, to provide a perfectly balanced environment by graciously but firmly enforcing the rules that have been carefully spelled out before the debate, vis-à-vis both the candidates and the audience. The moderator does not contribute any comments of her own, but does need skill to control (or draw out) questioners and candidates. A good sense of humor always helps. Because unforeseen problems do arise, the moderator must be quick-witted and resourceful at problem solving.

DISCUSSION LEADER: The discussion leader takes a more pro-active role than the moderator. She/he may steer or guide the discussion process to conform to predetermined guidelines and timetables. She/he may prod silent participants into voicing their opinions, ask leading questions to elicit group response, or close off discussion to move on to the next topic. She/he must, however, just like the moderator, be totally fair and objective.

The discussion leader must earn respect for her/his leadership of the group, but she/he must not dominate it. She/he needs to have a grasp of the issues involved and be well enough prepared to be able to frame appropriate questions, when necessary. She/he should be able to draw out reticent participants and control those who are overly dominant. She/he needs a good sense of timing, in order to fulfill the planned agenda. For candidates roundtables it is preferable to choose discussion leaders from outside the community. Most Leagues have a complement of experience discussion leaders from which to choose.

FACILITATOR: The facilitator's role is to provide the means and the ambience for the members of the group to be able to express themselves. Such skills are often required when the League is asked to provide a leader for an outside, less experienced group. Sample situations might be a PTA that wishes to discuss the pros and cons of a projected building program, or a Woman's Club wishing to discuss child care with a slate of primary candidates, or a series of focus groups to determine community concerns on Family Life Education. Facilitators, therefore, lead in the planning of the event, as well as at the actual meeting. The facilitator generally

participates in establishing the ground rules and/or delineating the major issues. At the meeting, she/he may rephrase the participants' questions, or tie several questions together, or unbundle an overly complex question. She/he may ask leading questions, or clarify positions, or add factual information to the discussion. However, because it is her/his job to assure that the group members express themselves, she/he contributes only as much as is necessary to maintain the fair and unbiased flow of the discussion. In addition to the skills needed by discussion leaders and moderators, she/he should be able to synthesize the information that is provided by the disparate members of the discussion group.

TELEVISION

Success in meeting all of the League’s goals in putting on debates – serving voters, putting candidates on record, reaching a large and varied audience, increasing League visibility – is multiplied many times over by televising your forum.

Selling your Forum to the Cable System

Once you have decided on the best station for your debate, write an email and/or a letter to the general manager of the selected cable system to pitch your debate and asking for a meeting. In your communications, tell them you will be following up with a phone call. Ask for a meeting.

Take to the meeting a written presentation that includes information about the League, its reputation in the community and its past experience with debates and voter education.

Tell the cable system representative the special skills and services the League can offer: working with the candidates, promoting the debate in the community and designing an effective and exciting format.

As in any negotiation, the key is in knowing what you want, knowing what the cable system wants, and finding ways to make them complement each other. Present your ideal debate plans, know your basic requirements and be prepared to negotiate as necessary. You may be asked to answer questions about the following:

Candidate commitment	Potential moderators
Tentative dates and time period	Forum content
Tentative site	Research and development of questions
Proposed format	Project timetable
Proposed set	Live audience

Cable System Interests

Airing Date and Time: Scheduling is a sticky issue for capable systems as well as for candidates, and the issue is complicated because debates are often held early in the fall season. Cable systems are reluctant to preempt regularly scheduled programs when networks are introducing the season’s new schedule. Do your best to work out a reasonable time and date for the forum to air, but realize that that cable station has many different obligations and may not always be able to offer debate prime viewing time.

Exclusivity: In order to reap the benefits of carrying a debate, the cable system will probably want “market exclusivity,” that is, the right to exclude any other station within the same viewing or listening area from airing the forum. The cable system may agree to permit another station to air a tape of the forum at a later date or time, or a telecaster may allow simultaneous radio

coverage. A station may also release the debate on the internet after it has been aired. When negotiating who can air the debate and when, remember the possibilities for airing on the internet. A wider audience can be reached when a debate is aired on air and online. The cable station may have the possibility to offer a live stream from their website, may allow an internet video release to be circulated to coalition partners, etc.

Format: The cable system will be interested in the forum format and will probably offer useful advice. The station must recognize, however, that the format must be accepted by the candidates. Some cable systems may be concerned that the forum format will be too dull or structured. Offer such cable systems your League's proposal for lively, innovative formats and enlist the station's help in selling it to the candidates if necessary. Other cable systems may be more comfortable with more structured formats out of concern that the debate might get out of control. Showing tapes of successful and lively forums may reassure them.

Moderator and Panel: Many stations see a debate as an excellent opportunity to showcase their star newscaster as the moderator. Others ask only that the moderator have experience appearing on television or radio and working with producers. The League should expect the station's chosen moderator to meet its standards, especially the ability to manage a forum and the demands of the preferred format.

The moderator should be willing to be briefed by the League and should understand the League's forum goals and requirements.

If there is a panel, stations will most likely want it to consist of well-known journalists. This is okay, but you should feel free to ask that the League is able to choose a panelist as well.

Retaining Rights: The station will be just as concerned as the League that the tapes of the forum not be used for partisan campaign or other unsuitable purposes. Inform the station of any uses planned for the tape (e.g. replay), but don't give up any rights.

Commercials: Advertising will be sold to air during the break in the forum. You have little control over what ads runs. However, please ask the television station to avoid running political ads during the debate.

Your Local League Interests

The Debate Site: The League may prefer to hold its forum out of the cable system's studio for various reasons—a larger possible audience, an interesting or historic setting, or a site provided by a cosponsor. Because of cost or convenience, the station is likely to prefer its own studio. If you prefer a non-studio site, make sure that broadcasting is technically possible. There must, for example, be adequate power, space and access for lights, cameras and other equipment. Most stations now have the ability to broadcast from remote locations easily and routinely, although the costs will be higher. Some smaller stations may not have the technology for broadcasting.

Credit for Funders: Be sure to keep the League's obligations to forum funders in mind. Work

with commercial cable systems to determine a mutually acceptable method for airing acknowledgements.

Forum News Coverage: Insist on access and facilities for reporters. Make sure that the station will allow still photographers and that there will be room for journalists to watch the forum live or on monitors.

League Control: Always keep in mind that the League is producing the forum and that you will get the credit or the criticism for how it comes off. Stay in control. Your League should know about and have a say in all important decisions about the forum on the air and off, even while respecting the professional and technical expertise of station personnel.

Don't lend the League's name and seal of approval to a cable system's forum or accept only such token functions as timekeeper or introducer. True control may require more work or more volunteers to put on a forum, but it will mean that the League's goals take precedence.

Continuing Negotiations: Do not expect to resolve all of these issues at the initial meeting with cable system personnel. Do try to get a commitment from the cable system, or set a definite date for a "yes" or "no" decision. Whether you have your answer or not, set up another meeting to work out details.

A cable system which worked very closely with a state League in a past debate compiled the following checklist of issues that should be settled between the League and the cable system. Other cable systems may have a different list, but this covers most important issues. Most of the answers will be obvious to Leagues but not necessarily to cable systems. The clear message is that good communication between the League and the cable system is essential throughout the relationship.

Checklist: Issues to Be Settled Between a League and a Cable Station

1. NEGOTIATIONS WITH CANDIDATES

- Who negotiates with candidates?
- Who has the final say in those negotiations?
- How often will the negotiator report to the other party?
- Does the negotiator know points about which the other party feels strongly?

2. FORMAT

- Who determines the moderator and panelists?
- Will the television station have a person on the panel or as the moderator (what exclusivity will be involved – e.g. no other people from competing cable stations)?
- Who determines questions asked?
- Will the format allow a lot of questions?
- Will the format allow any follow-ups?
- Does the format encourage candidate interaction?
- Will the president of the LWV make a statement? What other involvement in the actual broadcast will the LWV have?

3. TIME PERIOD

- Will the forum be telecast in prime time? What does the station consider prime time to be?
- Will it be telecast on a weekday or a weekend?
- Will the station more likely pick a weak time period for the forum or a stronger one? A weak time period for one station is another station's strong time period--thus the debate will be up against a strong program.
- Will the station be sensitive to placing the program in a time period that will attract an information-oriented audience?

4. PROMOTION

- How much promotion will the station dedicate to the debate? Consider 30-second spots, 10-second spots, 4-second IDs that go on station breaks; promotion inside news is a touchy subject but should be discussed.
- How many days before the forum will the on-air promotion begin? Seven days is good.
- Will the promotion be scheduled in good time periods? Expect all time periods, but a station committed to the program will run some in prime and in news.
- How often will the promotion be run?
- Who will produce the promotion (LWV or station)?
- Will the promotion utilize LWV logo, forum logo or other graphics?
- Will the promotion accurately represent the relationship between the station and the League ("sponsored by WXXX and the LWV")?
- Will the station buy advertising on other media (radio, newspaper, TV Guide) to promote the televised debate?

5. PUBLICITY

- Who will send news releases to all media?
- Who will approve news releases?
- Will League representatives be available to talk about the forum with other media?
- Will the station notify listing services of forum times?
- Will the League publish any leaflets or organize any activities to promote the forum?
- Will all publicity accurately reflect the relationship between the LWV and the TV station in production of the forum?

6. PRODUCTION AND COSTS

- Who pays for the facility used for the forum?
- Who pays for security for the forum?
- Who coordinates access to the forum (for media, League members and the public)? This includes communicating with everyone, printing of tickets (if necessary) and publicizing restrictions (if any)?
- Who pays the production costs for the originating station (set design, signs on the set, personnel costs, talent fees or, if not in studio, lights, electricity, transmission of signal from facility to studio)?
- What kinds of signs will be used on the set?
- What, if any, credits will the LWV want to display at the beginning and end of the telecast?
- Will the telecast accurately reflect the relationship between the League and the television

station in the forum?

- Who will organize a network of TV, radio and/or cable TV outlets to carry the forum to other audiences or market areas?
- Who will pay for the transmission of the forum from the originating station to the other stations?

7. MISCELLANEOUS

- Are there any conflicts of interest by involved parties of the League or the television station?
- Are there restrictions of any kind imposed on the procedure, questions or content of the televised forum?
- Is the forum considered a joint production with the TV station or a public event?
- If any legal costs are incurred during the production of this televised forum, who pays the legal fee?
- Who owns the rights to the forum? Are the ground rules for rebroadcast of the forum by anyone clear to LWV, TV stations, and all media and candidates involved?
- Will the TV station produce a public service announcement for the LWV?

At the appropriate time, you should make clear to the cable system that the final product which is seen by the public must reflect the entire forum. In keeping the League philosophy of fairness and impartiality, it is vital to preserve the integrity of the forum. All parties must be aware that the event may only be shown in its entirety. One exception to this rule permits that segments of up to three minutes in length may be used in a news broadcast.

Since the area of television forums is continuously evolving, please remember that we must be willing to demonstrate flexibility while adhering to underlying League principles. Rigid procedures therefore are counter productive. If a critical situation arises, consultation with LWVNJ Voters Service may be indicated.

Appendix A Insert Voter Registration Form

APPENDIX B

VOTER SERVICES FEE CHART (as of September 2012)

Fee Chart for services provided by a LWV in NJ

Prepared by LWFVNJEF Voters Services

No Fee is charged if sponsor is a local League.

Type of Service	Student Groups	Nonprofit Organizations, Colleges & PTA's	Government Groups	Business, Media & Political Parties	Public Schools & Libraries
Registration Drive	0	*	*	*	0
Organizing and Consulting for Candidate Debate/Forum	0	\$100.00 and up plus*	\$200.00 and up plus*	\$250.00 plus* \$300 plus* for LWVNJ Board or Committee Member	*
Moderator League Trained and Certified	0	\$85.00 and up plus*	\$150.00 and up plus*	\$200.00 plus* \$250.00* for LWVNJ Board or Committee Member	*
Facilitator	0	\$75.00 and up plus*	\$100.00 and up plus*	\$200.00 and up plus*	*(ask if budgeted)
Conducting Class(es) or Workshops	0	\$150.00 plus*	\$150.00 plus*	\$300.00 plus*	*(ask if budgeted)
Oversee non-governmental elections**	0	\$75.00/hour per LWV member Minimum \$150.00	N/A	\$75.00/hour per LWV member Minimum \$150.00	N/A

* Expenses: mileage @ prevailing rate, tolls, parking, telephone, cost of publications used, meals if appropriate. (May require additional fee for League member's time.)

** Includes: organizing, conducting, judging and/or certifying private elections.

Guidelines:

- When an LWVNJ officer or director is assigned, LWFVNJEF receives the fee. When a local League provides the personnel, the local League receives the fee.
- No fee is charged if the forum is sponsored by a local League.
- Checks should be made payable to the League involved. At no time may an individual take money personally for League services. The member's expenses should be submitted by voucher and reimbursed.
- These are considered minimum fees. It may be necessary to accommodate the special needs of some sponsoring organizations; the Moderator and/or local League should notify and consult with the LWVNJ Voter Service committee on appropriate fees.
- It is important to maintain consistency throughout the state, if any question arises around the adjustment of these fees, please contact your LWVNJ state board liaison.

APPENDIX C

FORUM ORGANIZATION CHECKLIST

A. Preliminary Planning

- _____ Local LWV determines to sponsor forum; done 4 or 5 months prior to election.
 - _____ Make informal contacts to assess interest and determine appropriate dates. Congressional/Legislative forums require contacting other LWV and/or civic groups in the district to coordinate activities.
 - _____ Identify appropriate site(s) and co-sponsors.

B. Voters Service Committee Responsibilities

- _____ Determine a mutually agreed upon date; Board authorizes to move ahead.
- _____ Contacts site and formally reserves; application and may require proof of insurance.

- _____ Determine the format for the forum (VSM pg.28-38).
 - _____ Contact local cable TV for coverage. (VSM pg. 41-45); send copy of format.
 - _____ Request a Moderator; contact LWVNJ office.
 - _____ Contact Moderator by phone/e-mail;
 - _____ Send letter of confirmation with copy of candidate letter and format.

- _____ Ascertain names and address of the candidates for office from the Office of the County Clerk or municipal clerk.
 - _____ Send a letter of invitation to participate to candidates; certified and regular mail;
 - _____ Send follow-up letter; include Agenda, prepared questions, and video Agreement;
 - _____ copies to cable and moderator.

- _____ Prepare public relations blurb; distribute to media in area (see sample).

- _____ Develop Questions (with input from co-sponsors and LWV members).
 - _____ Agree on Prepared Questions; save others for backup.
 - _____ Send follow-up letter including the Prepared Questions to candidates; again certified and regular mail.

C. Assign Duties for the Forum

- _____ Voters Service chair assumes overall administration.
 - _____ Liaison with cable personnel.
 - _____ Designate the one(s) to open, welcome, do flag, introduce moderator. Prepare the script(s); advise/copy the cable personnel.
 - _____ Two Timekeepers; stopwatch and time cards.
 - _____ Distribution of Agenda Format; copying and handing out at forum.
 - _____ Setting Up Speakers' Area: mikes in place for candidates and moderator; LWV/co-sponsor banners in place; Name cards pre prepared and placed; water.
 - _____ Provide Question Cards and pencils, available for attendees; Designate the people who are to pick up the question cards; and Designate who will do a preliminary review and sort of Q.C.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE CANDIDATE INVITATION LETTER *League of Women Voters*

Date

Candidate name
Address
City

Dear *Candidate name*,

As a service to the voters of *municipality*, the League of Women Voters of _____ together with *co-sponsor's name* will sponsor a public forum for the candidates for *elected office*. As an announced candidate, we invite your participation. The League of Women Voters does not endorse or oppose any candidate or political party. The purpose of the League is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.

The forum will be held on *day*, *date*, at *start and end time* at *location, address*.

The format of the forum will be as follows: (*Sample format, replace with your own*)

Each candidate will be given 2 minutes for an opening statement. The three attached questions have been prepared by the LWV. Each candidate will have 2 minutes to respond to each question. The audience will also be given the opportunity to write down their questions. Those questions will be collected and given to the moderator to read. Each candidate will have 1 1/2 minutes to respond to each question; if so desired, after all the candidates have responded, any candidate may have a follow up for 30 seconds. There will be 2 minutes for closing remarks from each candidate.

The order of speaking will be determined by a random drawing of numbers before the start of the forum, and will vary during the course of the meeting. In order to ensure impartiality, the moderator will be *name*, a member of the League of Women Voters of _____.

Questions and/or remarks from either the candidates or the audience must be related to the issues. No remarks of a personal or abusive nature will be permitted.

With the consent of all participating candidates, the League will arrange to have the forum videotaped and rebroadcast in full on *identify station*. We ask your agreement to this, and we also ask you to confirm that you will not allow your staff or supporters to misuse any part of the videotape of this forum, nor to videotape it. Any use of the League name or of footage from the forum in campaign materials, literature or advertising of any kind including Internet, cable or television, has not been authorized by the League of Women Voters. The League's nonpartisan position will be announced at the beginning of the forum, and we will ask you to confirm your agreement to it at the time.

If a candidate is unable to participate, a short statement from the candidate may be submitted and will be read by the moderator. No person shall be allowed to substitute for the candidate. A table outside the auditorium will be available for your campaign literature.

Please confirm your participation no later than *date* with *contact name* at *phone and/or e-mail*. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me. We look forward to working with you and seeing you on the *date of forum*.

Sincerely yours,

Signed

Name _____, Title

Organization sponsor

Cc: all candidates
moderator

Note: To be sent via Certified Mail, return receipt requested, as well as regular US Postal service. This allows a delivery lest they refuse to sign.

APPENDIX E LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF _____
Agreement

As a service to the voters of municipality, the League of Women Voters of _____ (“League”), together with co-sponsor’s name, is/are sponsoring a public forum for the candidates for elected office. You have agreed to participate in that forum. In consideration of the League’s sponsorship of the forum and the opportunity for you to present your case for election, you agree that you understand that the League never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties and that any use of the League name or of footage or other materials from the debate in campaign materials, literature or advertising of any kind, including Internet, cable or television, is not authorized by the League of Women Voters. You agree that you will not allow your staff or supporters to misuse any part of the videotape of this debate, if it is videotaped, nor to videotape or record the debate separately. If the debate is videotaped with your consent, pursuant to arrangements made by the League, you agree that the League will have a perpetual, non-exclusive, royalty-free, world-wide license to reproduce, distribute, publicly perform and publicly rebroadcast the debate, including the use of your name, image, likeness, and participation in the debate as well as any copyrighted content you contribute during the debate. The League agrees that it will not edit the videotape of the debate and will not arrange for the rebroadcast of anything but the entire debate.

Candidate’s signature: _____ Date: _____

Candidate’s name (print): _____

Candidate’s signature: _____ Date: _____

Candidate’s name (print): _____

Candidate’s signature: _____ Date: _____

Candidate’s name (print): _____

Candidate’s signature: _____ Date: _____

Candidate’s name (print): _____

League authorized signature: _____ Date: _____

League member’s name (print): _____

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR CANDIDATE FORUM

I Introduction

- Welcome
- Pledge to flag – *optional*
- Introduction of moderator
- LWV mission: *The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League of Women Voters neither supports nor opposes a political party or candidate.*
- Introduction of timekeeper(s)
- Yellow card signifies ½ minute remaining, red card signifies that your time is up. You may finish your sentence, but please do not start a new one.
- If the forum is taped or televised, it should be announced.
- Ground Rules: (*example*)
 - There will be no personal statements or attacks.
 - Audience will be limited to questions to the candidates, not statements.
 - Hold your applause to the end.
 - Turn off cell phones.

II Opening Statements (1½ - 2 minutes for each candidate, depending on how many)

- Order of speaking has been determined by a drawing of numbers before the meeting began.
- NB: Order will vary during the remainder of the forum.

III Question and Answer Period

- The candidates will have a specific time to answer each question – usually 1 or 1 ½ minutes.
- Candidates may request time for a rebuttal, usually 30 seconds, as time allows.
- Sponsoring organization may wish to prepare two or three questions in advance.
- Questions from the audience may be either written or spoken when recognized by the moderator.
- Questions must be concise; lengthy statements or preambles are not permitted.
- Members of the audience should identify themselves by stating their name and address in order to verify residence in community.
- Written questions may be submitted on index cards. The questioner should include his/her name and address on the card, although the identity is usually not revealed.
- Questions to be screened for redundancy.
- The sponsoring organization may assist the moderator in collecting the questions.
- The moderator will attempt to eliminate duplicates.
- Questions of a personal nature or not related to the issues will not be used.
- Moderator will vary the order of speaking.

IV Closing Statements (2 minutes for each candidate)

**APPENDIX G SAMPLE: AGENDA FORMAT FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
CANDIDATES NIGHT PROGRAM**

*Rosmore City Council
October 21, 2012 at 7:30 p.m.
RC Municipal Building-Council Chambers*

- 7:30 – 7:40 Co-sponsor president, name welcomes Girl Scout Troop 24 for the Salute to the Flag. League president, name will provide opening remarks, then Introduce the Moderator, name .
- The Moderator will introduce the candidates and provide an explanation of the evening’s format and introduce the Timekeepers, names .
- 7:40 – 7:55 Three minute opening statement by each of the four candidates
Rosmore City Council Candidates
(Vote for one)
Joseph Anthony 2nd Ward, Republican
Michelle Pond 2nd Ward, Democrat
(Vote for one)
David Jenkins 5th Ward, Democrat
Michael Young 5th Ward, Republican
- 7:55 – 8:20 Questions prepared and given to candidates prior to meeting. 1 ½ minutes will be allowed for each candidate to respond.
- 8:25 – 9:15 Questions via cards from the audience to the candidates. Up to 1 minute will be allowed for each candidate to respond. There will be an opportunity for a 30 second rebuttal if indicated.
- 9:15 – 9:25 Each candidate will be allowed two minutes for summation.
- 9:25 – 9:30 Closing announcements and adjournment, v.s.chair name.

FLOOR RULES

Audience questioners should use the cards provided to write their question and to whom it is directed. The moderator will avoid redundancy and select the questions to ensure a range of topics.

Questions may be addressed to a particular candidate, but all the candidates will have the opportunity to reply.

After a candidate responds, there will be no discussion from the floor.

Audience questions and candidates remarks must follow League policy of being concerned with issues, not personalities. The moderator will not allow any abusive, personal or irrelevant questions or remarks.

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE: FLOOR RULES FOR AUDIENCE AGENDA **When Questions are Written or at Mike**

FLOOR RULES

This is a forum devoted to hearing the views only of the candidates running for ___. To ensure that the meeting is as informative as possible, we ask that everyone abide by the following:

Audience questions and candidates' remarks must follow League policy of being concerned with issues, not personalities. The moderator will not allow any abusive, personalized or irrelevant questions or remarks.

So that we can move along in the time allotted and hear equally from each candidate, we ask that you hold your applause until the end of the forum.

Audience questioners should use the cards provided to write their question and to whom it is directed. The questions should address only those issues that come before this body to be voted upon. The moderator will avoid redundancy and select the questions to ensure a range of topics.

OR

Audience questioners should step to the microphone and when recognized by the moderator, state their name and address, then briefly ask their question. The question should address only those issues that come before this body to be voted upon. To ensure a range of topics and avoid redundancy the moderator may disallow a question.

Questions may be addressed to a particular candidate, but all the candidates will have the opportunity to reply.

After a candidate responds, there will be no discussion from the floor.

APPENDIX I

OPENING SCRIPT – SAMPLE
CANDIDATES’ DEBATE

Welcome

Good evening. On behalf of the League of Women Voters of _____ I’m pleased to welcome you to this forum. The League’s partners in presenting this forum are the American Association of University Women, _____ Senior Activity Center, WCBA TV35, and the _____ Gazette (sample, insert your own). We are grateful for their nonpartisan participation and support.

My name is _____, a member of the _____ League, and I’ll be your host this evening.

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Elections and voting are core concerns for the League of Women Voters. Year in and year out, Leagues are committed to providing fact-based information about issues and the positions candidates take on those issues to help voters make their own decisions and participate in the process.

Conducting debates like this is one of the ways we encourage informed and active participation in government. Your participation today helps us carry out our mission. We thank you for coming.

We would like to make you aware that, in New Jersey there will be a Constitutional Amendment question on the November __, 20__ General Election Ballot, authorizing the Legislature by law to

As a service to the voting public, the League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Fund has prepared an analysis of the question with reasons to vote either pro or con. It is a complex issue; we urge you to take advantage of this resource to acquire the necessary understanding to cast an informed vote. The prepared summary sheet is available for you to take at the entrance table.

If you would like to participate in any of these efforts, the LWV of _____ welcomes members, both men and women. You will find information and membership forms at the entrance table also.

Any other housekeeping notes go here.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office, or political parties. Any use of the League name or of footage from the debate in campaign materials, literature or advertising of any kind, including internet, cable or television, has not been authorized by the League of Women Voters.

TV35 will be taping the proceedings for rebroadcast in its entirety on public access channels __, __, and __.

As a courtesy to the candidates, please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices now, and please refrain from taking photographs during the debate.

Introductions

At this time I would like to introduce our moderator for this debate, Ms. Joan Smith. Per our League practice she is not from this voting district. Ms. Smith is a League trained moderator and a member of the _____ LWV. Ms. Smith will introduce the candidates and outline the format for this evening.

APPENDIX J

FEEDBACK FORMS

League of Women Voters of New Jersey
CANDIDATE FORUM **SPONSOR** FEEDBACK FORM

In order to improve our services, we hope that you will take the time to give us your feedback.

Sponsor Organization: _____

Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

Fee charged: _____

Would you use this moderator again? _____

Why or why not? _____

Thank you for your assistance.

Please return to:

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey
204 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
(t) (609) 394-3303
(f) (609) 599-3993

League of Women Voters of New Jersey
MODERATOR FEEDBACK FORM

Dear Moderator,

In order to improve our services, please provide your feedback about your experiences as a moderator.

Name of Moderator: _____

Your contact information:

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Sponsor of forum: _____

Date of forum: _____

Candidates for what office (s): _____

Fee paid, if any: _____

How far in advance of the forum were you contacted? _____

How much of the detail planning did you do? (Approximate) _____

Would you return to this organization? _____

Why or why not? _____

Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve this process? _____

We greatly appreciate your work with moderating.

Thank you for your assistance.

Please return to:

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey

204 West State Street

Trenton, NJ 08608

(t) (609) 394-3303

(f) (609) 599-3993

APPENDIX K

Sample Public Relations Blurb

Contact: Name of League member
LWV Debate Manager
Phone number
e-mail address

For Immediate Release: Give Date

League and Sponsor to Hold Municipality Primary Mayoral/Town Council Candidates Forum

Municipality – On day, date, the League of Women Voters of _____ and full identifying name of sponsor will hold a moderated forum for the *Republican or Democratic* challengers who are running for Municipality mayor and council in the June __Primary Election. The forum will be held at the name and address of site.

There are three *Republican or Democratic* challengers for mayor/name of office: name of C#1, name of C#2, and name of C#3. There are six *R or D* challengers for two seats on the town council/name of office: name of C#4, name of C#5, name of C#6, name of C#7, name of C#8, and name of C#9, (incumbent).

The candidates will each provide a background statement and will answer questions provided by the League. There will also be time for questions from the public.

Name of moderator from the _____ League of Women Voters will moderate the forum. The forum is being sponsored by sponsor name. If you have any questions about the forum or the League of Women Voters, please contact League member at phone number.

cc. Local Media, Daily Record, Star Ledger, Neighbor News, Patch
One liner for cable TV 36

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This list includes information of particular interest to Voters' Service directors as well as for the general public.

Voting in New Jersey

Choosing a Candidate

New Jersey Citizen's Guide to Government (annual)

VOTERS GUIDE (will be on web if available)

The above publications may be ordered through your publications director or from the LWVNJ office. See the state publications catalog. See the national publications catalog for additional information on voting.