



Candidates Events: How to Hold Successful Candidates Events

Toolkit

Candidates Events:

How to Hold Successful Candidates Events



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	5
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL LEAGUES TO HOLD CANDIDATE EVENTS	7
CANDIDATE EVENTS ESSENTIALS	8
LWVNYS POLICIES ON CANDIDATE EVENTS	9
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	10
DETERMINING WHETHER TO HOLD AN IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL CANDIDATE EVENT	11
IN-PERSON VERSUS VIRTUAL FORUMS: TRADE-OFFS	13
CANDIDATE EVENT FORMATS AND METHODS	14
PROCESS FOR ORGANIZING CANDIDATE EVENTS	17
WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAGUE BOARD?	17
WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE?	18
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MODERATOR?	22
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TEAM DURING THE CANDIDATE EVENT?	24
SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH SITUATIONS WHICH COMMONLY ARISE DURING CANDIDATE EVENTS	25
DEBATE CO-SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES	26
PROVIDING A MODERATOR AT A NON-LEAGUE EVENT	26
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING JUDICIAL EVENTS	27
MODERATOR TRAINING	28
VIRTUAL BACKGROUNDS FOR TIMINGS	29
PROMOTING MODERATOR RECRUITMENT	30
APPENDIX: TOOLS THAT YOU WILL NEED	31
A. Sample Save the Date Letter for a Candidate Event	31
B. Sample Invitation Letter to Candidates to Candidate Events: Primary Elections	32
C. Sample Invitation Letter to Candidates to Candidate Events: General Elections	33

- D. Sample Email Invitation to Participate 34
- E. Sample Video-Recording Policy for Candidate and Venues 35
- F. Sample Video Policy Release Form 36
- G. Sample Instructions to Candidates in Advance of Virtual Event 37
- H. Sample Email Invitation to Practice Session for Virtual Event 38
- I. Sample Confirmation Letter to Candidates for Virtual Event 39
- J. Sample Press Release Announcing a Candidate Event 40
- K. Sample Press Release for Virtual Event 41
- L. Sample Ground Rules for an In-Person Candidate Event 42
- M. Sample Format for an In-Person Candidate Event 44
- N. Sample Panel Format 46
- O. Sample Form for Candidate Questions for an Assembly Seat 47
- P. Sample Moderator Script for an In-Person Candidate Event 48
- Q. Sample Timeline and Moderator Script for Virtual Event 51
- R. Sample Tips for Candidates Who are Not as Familiar with Zoom 56
- S. Sample Co-Sponsorship Agreement for Candidate Event 58
- T. Sample Statement Canceling a Primary Candidate Event Due to Empty Chair Policy Not Being Met 59
- U. Sample Press Release Canceling a Candidate Event Due to Empty Chair Policy Not Being Met 60

- VOTER SERVICE METRICS REPORT 61

INTRODUCTION

Voter Service has made the League of Women Voters the foremost nonpartisan volunteer organization in the political arena today; Voter Service brings the League visibility; Voter Service is the heart of the League.

This toolkit is designed to help League Boards and Voter Service Directors/Committees plan and conduct effective, fair, and interesting candidate events. It contains practical information, suggestions and advice to help you with your efforts to educate and inform the electorate about the issues, about the candidates, about the political process; this is our mission. In the Appendix, are templates and samples of letters, emails, policies, press releases, etc. that local Leagues may copy and use for their own events.

There are many forms and formats for Candidates Events, many of which are described and discussed later in this guide. There are also Candidate Events held virtually on different platforms. No matter what format is used, the rules, policies, suggestions, and procedures outlined apply to all. In other words, the format and title used for the gathering do not change the basic principles which should be applied to all meetings at which the League invites candidates to meet the voters.

To assist local leagues with all types of candidate events (in-person, virtual, or hybrid) we have included what is consistent and constant for both in-person and virtual events and when there are differences to consider. It is also suggested that if planning an in-person candidate format, a live streaming and/or recording of the event also be planned. This will allow an in-person candidate event to reach as many people as possible.

Voter Service activities must always protect the nonpartisanship of the League. Candidates and political parties are never supported or opposed. Voter Service activities present only the facts on issues so that citizens can make their own decisions. Our well-deserved reputation for fairness depends on a careful safeguarding of this!

In all that we do as a League, we need to keep track of how many volunteers help us and how many people are impacted by our work. This is an important story to tell exemplifying the effort and impact that the League has on educating the public and improving our communities. It is also important for the state and local Leagues in seeking funding from donors or foundations to continue our work. On the next few pages, please see a chart to be completed for each candidate event that you organize and hold. We look forward to seeing all the great work and results that your League accomplished.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT WHILE PLANNING AND CARRYING OUT ANY CANDIDATE EVENTS, LEAGUES MAKE CERTAIN THAT THEY WILL BE PERCEIVED AS BEING NONPARTISAN.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

League of Women Voters DEI Policy

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-policy>



In planning and implementing activities to encourage people to vote, Leagues should ask themselves a few questions to ensure they are including and reaching out to all people in their communities. Consulting people with different experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds and asking them to join your effort will strengthen the activity and help ensure its success.

- How diverse is the group planning and implementing this activity?
- Are key stakeholders included? One of the primary factors that determines if a stakeholder is key is the specific relationship that the stakeholder has with the League’s mission and goals.
-
- Does this work impact a group or community? If so, is their voice represented?
- Is the group of decision makers diverse enough?
- Does this activity help us meet the needs of underserved voters?
- Have we considered various, specific marginalized groups?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL LEAGUES TO HOLD CANDIDATE EVENTS

Local Leagues may choose to offer or collaborate in offering candidate events whenever there is a contested election at its level of government. Candidate events at other levels of government are governed by the following guidelines.

- The LWVUS is responsible for candidate events for national office.
- The LWVNYS is responsible for candidate events for statewide office.
- An Inter League Organization (ILO) or a group of Leagues may choose to hold a single candidate event for candidates whom they share - those running for the U.S. House of Representatives, the state legislature or county government. Sometimes candidates prefer to take part in several events sponsored by local Leagues, rather than a single shared event. Communication among Leagues and between different levels of Leagues is essential to facilitate scheduling and to avoid conflicts where sharing candidates exists. The ILO still must ask permission of LWVNYS to organize a candidate event for a federal race, e.g, congressional race.

Candidate events may be held by Local Leagues for the following elections:

- Federal, state, county, city, town or village general elections (events for federal or statewide races must be preapproved by LWVNYS)
- Federal, state, county, city, town or village primary elections (events for federal or statewide races must be preapproved by LWVNYS)
- Special elections to fill vacancies between regular elections
- Elections run by providers of local government services, such as fire or improvement districts
- School board elections
- Community elections, such as housing authorities or tenant committees.
- Judicial elections.

In conjunction with its responsibility to hold candidate events for statewide or federal offices, LWVNYS reserves the exclusive right to contact the candidates for statewide or federal offices for the purpose of securing their participation in candidate forums, debates, and other voter service activities. In its discretion, the LWVNYS may agree to contact candidates for a statewide or federal offices for a local League's event, or delegate the right to contact the candidates to the local League. Local Leagues are not to contact statewide or federal candidates directly or organize a statewide candidate event without the permission of LWVNYS.

Procedures For Hosting a Candidate Event for Federal Office

Before a local League can organize or hold a Candidate Event for federal office, **the local League must contact the state office** so that such events can be coordinated among the local Leagues within the election district. Once the state office has been consulted, the local must comply with the rules for federal election events.

CANDIDATE EVENTS ESSENTIALS FOR BOTH IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL CANDIDATE EVENTS

EACH AND EVERY CANDIDATE EVENT, NO MATTER WHAT IT IS NAMED, MUST ABIDE BY WRITTEN POLICIES BELOW

1. Local Leagues must develop a comprehensive written Candidate Event policy reviewed annually by the Board that includes:
 - Nonpartisan statement.
 - Prohibition against empty chair debates (LWVNY adopted policy July 2017).
 - Recording policy.
 - Criteria for Candidate inclusion (LWVNY recommends only including candidates on ballot).
 - Policy on distribution of campaign literature.
2. Send Candidate Event Policy to candidates with invitation to event.
 - Obtain acknowledgement of receipt of policy signed by candidate and campaign manager.
3. If sponsoring a primary candidate event, you **MUST OFFER** to sponsor a candidate event for any other party holding a primary for same race (LWVNY adopted policy July 2017); if the second party declines, the local League may still organize the event for the first party.
4. Determine if the candidate event will be held in person, virtually or both. **THE POLICIES ARE THE SAME FOR AN IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL EVENT.**
5. Careful planning of event by local League requires attention to site, moderator, date, venue, adherence to nonpartisan and Empty Chair policy.
6. Publicity must include a Nonpartisan Statement and the Empty Chair Policy.
7. Display signage with Nonpartisan statement the evening of event or as first slide in virtual event.
8. If event is cancelled because of an Empty Chair reason (only one candidate for a race shows up), publicize this fact.

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE LEAGUE IS NOT ONLY NONPARTISAN
BUT PERCEIVED THAT WAY**

- Publicity should include nonpartisan statement and policy on empty chair.
- Display signage with nonpartisan statement the evening of event.
- If event is cancelled because of no empty chair, publicize reason.
- Follow written policy carefully.

LWVNYS POLICIES ON CANDIDATE EVENTS

LWVNYS Policy on Open or Empty Chairs in Candidate Events

It is extremely important that all Leagues throughout New York state speak with one voice, have clear and consistent policies, and adhere to our nonpartisan policy. Therefore "open or empty" chair candidate meetings will not be allowed at any level of League for any elected position. Any League sponsored public event that invites a candidate for elected office will be considered a candidate meeting-- A candidate meeting with only one candidate physically present is an "open or empty" chair candidate meeting. *(Adopted by State Board July 2017)*

You may call this policy:

- Empty Chair
- Empty Chair: Two or More Candidates for Each Race Must Be Present
- Or you can just refer to it as candidate event policy and state requirements

Requirements: Two or more candidates for each race must be present

LWVNYS Policy on Candidate Events for Primaries

Any League holding a candidate meeting for a party primary for elected office, must offer to hold a candidate meeting for any party that has a primary for that elected office. This will ensure that the League is not perceived as supporting or opposing a party. *(Adopted by State Board July 2017)*

LWVNYS Policy on Recording/Taping

Only those individuals specifically authorized by the Leagues may record or videotape a candidate event. The League of Women Voters owns the content of the candidate event and may post recordings of it in its entirety on League media. Any use of the authorized recording requires the advance approval of the League of Women Voters, except that other local Leagues may post the recording on their websites. Only licensed media, including TV, radio and newspapers are entitled to air portions of this recording. No one is permitted to edit footage for campaign or other purposes.

This recording/taping policy includes live streaming. If a candidate event is being live streamed, the League owns and must maintain control of the live stream. If it is being archived, it must be shown in its entirety. *(Adopted by State Board August 2018)*

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Guidelines for Candidate Participation

All candidates on the ballot in any race must be invited to an event for that race

If the date for certification of the ballot has not yet arrived or if a legal challenge of one or more candidates has delayed certification, the League shall exercise its good faith judgment about which candidates to invite and may invite any candidate whom it believes has a reasonable possibility of obtaining ballot access. In the invitation, it should be noted that only those candidates certified to be on the ballot will be permitted to participate in the candidate event. By the time of the event, only those candidates on the ballot can participate at the event.

Multiple Seats with Multiple candidates

These types of events may present unique challenges. It is always preferable that you have candidates from at least two different parties for any race, even if there are multiple seats being contested in the same race. It is possible, however, to hold a candidate event with only one party's participation if there are multiple candidates for that one race BUT the League should consider the appearance of doing this prior to making this decision.

Candidate Event Co-Sponsorship Guidelines

It is important that the League of Women Voters maintain its nonpartisan position when co-sponsoring a Candidate Event. The first step in agreeing to co-sponsorship is to review the other organization's mission statement to ensure that its goals are consistent with those of the League. (see page ___)

League Member Serves as Moderator

The Moderator of a candidate event manages the event and must remain in control of the event. If possible, it is suggested that the Moderator NOT be a constituent of the candidates in the race of the event (easy to accomplish for a virtual event). **If the moderator is a constituent of the candidates in the race, they should acknowledge that from the podium at the beginning of the event.**

Community Considerations

In planning any candidate event, the community in which the event will be held must be taken into consideration. The League must consider how to educate the public and meet the needs of their community. This may include an event in a language other than English or accessibility for individuals with disabilities at an in-person event. These considerations, especially meeting the needs of the disabled, may be easier in a virtual event where features such as closed captioning may be available. The League should network with organizations in that community to ensure the event will meet the needs of that community.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE MORE CANDIDATES TO PARTICIPATE (to avoid canceling because of the Empty Chair Policy)

The League strictly maintains its no-empty chair policy and all local Leagues are required to follow it as well. When only one candidate agrees to participate in a candidate event, or if some are nonresponsive to requests to participate, the League is encouraged to do the following:

- Call a reporter and try to get an article written about the importance of candidate events (job interviews) for the public to be educated voters;
- Write a Letter to the Editor of your local newspaper about the importance of candidate events (job interviews) for the public to be educated voters;
- Tweet at the candidates and their campaigns who have not responded, e.g, “Where are you, _____ (candidate name)? Others have agreed to debate. The public deserves to hear from you.”
- Post on other social media accounts who has responded, who has not responded and who has refused to participate.

DETERMINE WHETHER TO HOLD AN IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL CANDIDATE EVENT

In 2020, many local Leagues became very competent in organizing virtual candidate events. It is now suggested that local Leagues continue to consider using virtual events when needed and a combined approach of an in-person event that is also live-streamed to allow more people to watch it. **Regardless of which type of event a local League organizes, the requirements are the same.**

Virtual forums are more inclusive: they allow greater attendance and participation. Our objective is to inform voters by offering forums where candidates engage with each other and voter questions.

Virtual Candidate Event Similarities with In-Person Events

Here are our comments, general guidelines, and some recommendations for **both** live and virtual events:

- **Streaming live or taping the event for later viewing reaches larger audiences.** The size of audience – both watching live and accessing it after the event - is much larger for each type of virtual events than for any in-person event. Therefore, if you are organizing an in-person event, consider streaming it live or at least tape it to post later for a wider audience.

- **The same League policies and rules apply for both live and virtual candidate events.**
 - Our nonpartisanship policy
 - Our No empty chair policy (requiring more than one candidate to be present for each race)
 - Our recording policy, and
 - Having candidates agree to and sign acceptance of our policies

- **The same comprehensive planning is required for both live and virtual candidate events.** The detailed planning for in-person and virtual candidate forums is the same, but with one major difference: for a virtual forum, instead of choosing a venue, you are choosing a format. **Both** types of candidate events still require a team, including a moderator, timekeeper, and veters.
 - As always, the moderator needs to remain in control, but having a moderator who lives outside of the district becomes much easier in a virtual forum.
 - Veters will be able to vet questions before the virtual forum takes place. It is recommended that questions be collected in advance through multiple social media sites and websites. The public can send questions to the League and the League can have a committee review, as usual, to avoid repetition, delete questions to single candidates, or delete inappropriate questions. It is not recommended that the audience have an “open mic” during a virtual event, but some have suggested that maybe the audience could offer questions on the “chat” function on Zoom events. This can be challenging and requires at least one League member just monitoring the chat room.

Challenges for Virtual Candidate Events

- **Technical expertise is essential for virtual events.** Leagues that do not have someone who is tech-savvy probably should not attempt to do a virtual event by themselves. Using a school, town, college or local cable access is highly recommended for these Leagues as those entities have people who can handle all the technology aspects and the League can concentrate on what it does best – organize and moderate the event.

- As noted above, a common benefit with in-person events is that the video of the event can be archived and then posted on YouTube, Facebook and websites so it can be viewed by many more people after the event. However, there are unique challenges with broadcasting virtual events:
 - Having the event on Zoom and simultaneously live on Facebook can allow nasty and inappropriate comments to be posted on the League’s Facebook page, so it is recommended that the event be posted to Facebook **after** the event rather than simultaneously live (unless your tech person can prevent real-time comments during the event to be posted on Facebook). Comments may be

turned off from YouTube so it is possible to have it live on YouTube without this issue if using Zoom.

- If possible, it is critical that the local League conduct a trial run of the event to test the technology and equipment that the candidates, moderator, and time keeper will be using. This is important because it allows the participants to double check their own computers’ audio and video for problems, and ensures that all know how the event will run. It also allows the moderator to “meet” the candidates and review the ground rules and procedures to be followed. Even if the trial run is only with some of the participants, it will help ensure a trouble-free event. The most common issue reported by local Leagues that organized virtual candidate events is the candidates’ lack of technological knowledge or the candidates’ weak internet connections that can cause interrupted or loss of connections during the event. It is important that during trial run the candidates use the same equipment and exact location they will be using during the actual forum.

In-Person vs Virtual Forums: Trade-Offs

	In-Person	Virtual
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Venue rental ● A/V & setup ● Supplies (cards/pencils) ● Sometimes defrayed by sponsorships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zoom license (min \$15/mo.) ● Website URL ● Learning curve for volunteers to get comfortable with technology
Organizing Cost/complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to coordinate dates/times for both candidates & venue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ requires commuting time for candidates, audience, LWV team (can add 2 hours to the evening) ○ centrality of venue to district's constituents ○ complexity around empty-chair cancellations (cost, notice to audiences) ● Some volunteers must manage in-person aggression by campaign managers/disgruntled public (security has sometimes been needed) ● Contentious races can cause rowdy audiences, difficult questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to coordinate date/time for candidates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ no commuting time added ○ no location or parking issues ○ empty-chair cancellation less inconvenient to home viewers ● No difficult in-person conversations with candidates, their staff, audiences ● Using 2 platforms to separate candidates & audiences removes management issues (no audience disruptions, chants, signs, quarrels) ● Soliciting questions in advance reduces stress on moderator

# Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically seek 8-11 on LWV team: • Forums where 60-150 audience members expected may need 4-6 runners and 2-3 veters • Moderator, Timer, Runners (to collect questions) & Veters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically seek 5-7 on LWV team: • Moderator, Timer, 2-3 Veters, 1-2 Tech can handle hundreds of viewers — particularly if questions are solicited both before and during forum
Outreach to Voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: Bd of Educ live forums: 30-60 typically attended • Live-streaming required local TV to agree to video • LWV can't subsequently post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bd of Educ virtual forums: 800 to 2300 viewers (600 and 1200 viewed live) • Video posted/archived on LWV website (under League control)
Value to LWV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-run and well-attended forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ educate the public and ○ burnish LWV brand for execution and educational value • Provide opportunity to hand out LWV membership info and solicit new members • Good conversations allow follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased viewership suggests considerably greater voter education value and greater reach of LWV brand; • Opening/closing can direct viewers to join LWV online at same site— or click links to Vote411 and more information

CANDIDATE EVENT FORMATS AND METHODS

Candidate Event Formats

A critical factor to the success of any Candidate Event is the format that is employed. There is no single correct format; the number of candidates, local issues, the chosen setting and the candidates themselves can often influence the final choice of the format. With any format, statements and responses to questions should alternate among candidates; questions should avoid duplications; each question should be answered and answerable by each candidate who wishes to speak. Above all, issues, not personalities, should be addressed.

Below we have identified separately the methods available for a virtual event but many of the features of the format for an in-person event still apply to the virtual event

There are many forms of candidate events. Several of the possibilities are described below. The one most often used by local Leagues is the “formal” format, which is often called a “Debate,” “Candidate Forum,” or a “Meet the Candidates Night.”

Formal: This format presents opening statements by all candidates with the order of speaking determined by drawing lots and closing statements in reverse order from the opening statements. Audience questions can be made in person at the microphone (must have process to stop an inappropriate question, rant or just comment by the audience member) or can be

written on cards distributed when the audience members enter the debate area. Written questions can be given directly to the moderator or screened by League members to avoid unanswerable, illegible or duplicate questions. If the technical equipment is available, questions may be emailed or phoned in by the at-home listeners/viewers. Rebuttals may be allowed especially using “red cards” which determines how many rebuttals each candidate can make during the entire event. All statements, responses and questions are timed.

Panels: This format involves having a panel of questioners. It was once thought that experienced news reporters could best ferret out information from the candidates, but now many panels are made up of a diverse group representing different media, different viewpoints and different backgrounds. In this format all candidates have an opportunity to answer all questions and follow-up questions may be asked. Responses are subject to time limits. The panel consists of from three to five questioners. If a panel comprised of community groups or co-sponsors is used, the Voter Service Committee should take part in editing and coordinating the questions to assure nonpartisanship and diversity. Opening statements can be omitted but closing statements should be included. This format does not include questions from the audience. A more experienced moderator may be needed for this format than for formal debates, especially if follow-up questions are asked or if the candidates are allowed rebuttal time.

Cumulative Time: This format promotes interchange among candidates, allows them to hold each other accountable, and keeps voter interest while enabling them to see the differences among the candidates. This format requires particularly experienced moderators and timers.

At a cumulative time candidate event, candidates are told how much cumulative time they have for the entire question period at the beginning of the debate by the moderator and are timed by their own timekeeper. Each candidate is kept aware of how much time s/he has used during the debate and how his/her time usage compares with that of the other candidates.

The forum begins with a question asked by the moderator, which all candidates answer. (Additional questions can be asked by the moderator or by members of the audience.) When all have responded to the question they can use some of their time to rebut, add to their original answer or question other candidates. This format encourages a candidate to respond briefly on a topic deemed to be less important and to use more time to discuss more fully issues considered more important. The candidates can self-moderate to balance time discrepancies. Candidates cannot “save up” time during the question period to make a speech at the end. Usually, a two-minute closing statement is included with this format. This format requires an experienced moderator and one timekeeper per candidate.

Virtual Candidate Event Methods

Many of these methods offer closed captioning of the event which should be included if possible. If not possible during the event, the archived version on YouTube should indicate that closed captioning is available through YouTube.

Zoom Webinar

The Zoom webinar feature is the most expensive method and requires the most expertise of Zoom features, but also provides the League with the most control of the event. The League must have a subscription to Zoom and pay for the webinar feature which is beyond the basic Zoom pricing. Preregistration can be required or not for attendees. With the webinar feature, the organizer or host can have only the moderator and candidate be viewed on the screen (no audience) and prevents the audience from interrupting or interacting in any way during the event. Although virtual backgrounds can be used to make it all consistent, this was a problem for some candidates and moderators so is not a recommendation.

Zoom Basic Service

This option is cheaper than the Zoom webinar feature but it does not allow as much control for the host or moderator. Preregistration is possible so the public can be required to request the link and require a password, and the host can mute all participants except the candidates, but the audience can unmute themselves and the host cannot prevent total access by the audience

Working with a local cable access station

With this option, the League can concentrate solely on the event procedures and implementation. The technology is provided by the cable station so no knowledge of the technology is required by the League. The archived event can be posted after the event on multiple cable access websites, YouTube, and the League's website. This method can be much less expensive even if the cable station requires a small fee for the service.

Facebook Live

This method has no cost for the technology if the local League has a Facebook page. Typically, Facebook live is often combined with another method to provide another live streaming of the event.

Collaborating with a School District or Town

Many local Leagues coordinate with school districts in their area to provide candidate events for school board elections. This method has no cost and does not require the League to handle the technology. The school district's technology - either Zoom, WebEx, or other program - can provide control of the event to prevent audience interruption. The League can provide the moderator with questions solicited or reviewed in advance. The school district (or town for local elections) can advertise the event as well as advertise for questions from their school communities. Again, the video can be posted on the school district's website, as well as YouTube, social media sites, and the League's website.

Collaborating with a College or University

This method is like the school district or town method, but it can reach an even wider audience. For the gubernatorial candidate event organized by the state League in 2018, a college provided their technology and staff to livestream the event on multiple sites so the League

could concentrate on moderating the event. This event was also an in-person event, so the livestreaming enabled a wider viewing of the event. This method may also encourage younger voters, as the college can help to market the event so it will be viewed by more who are at the college.

PROCESS FOR ORGANIZING CANDIDATE EVENTS

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAGUE BOARD?

To Establish Policies Regarding Conduct of Candidate Events

Candidate Events are the responsibility of the entire local League board, and policies governing them should not be made by the Voter Service chair or committee in isolation. The entire board is responsible for the success of the candidate event and should be active in the planning and oversight of the event. It is crucial that the League maintains control of the event from the inception. The chair recommends, but the board makes the final decisions.

In addition to the Nonpartisan Policy, policies governing the following should be in **WRITING and** reviewed annually. Leagues should consult LWVUS and LWWNY published policies regarding the following aspects of the Candidate Event.

1. Policy for candidate eligibility for participation in candidate events
2. Significant candidate criteria
3. Policy prohibiting empty-chair debates
4. Policy for candidates who cannot appear (substitutes, read statements...)
5. Policy for recording of candidate events.
6. Criteria for canceling the event.
7. What campaign literature, if any, will be allowed at the candidate event?

To Develop Criteria for Candidate Significance and Inclusion in Events:

In most cases, all candidates certified by the Board of Elections seeking the same office are invited to participate, both from recognized parties and independent candidates.

We strongly recommend that no write-in candidates be allowed to participate. An easy way to determine who can participate is by only including those candidates who are certified on the official ballot.

To Determine which, if any, Candidate Events will be held in an election cycle.

Several months before an election, the Board should consider and decide whether the League will hold one or more candidate events for a particular race or races. Among the criteria for making this decision are:

1. Will such an event serve League goals of informing the voter about the candidates and the issues?
2. Will the event enhance League visibility in the community and attract an audience?

3. Does the League have the people power and other resources to carry it off?
4. Are the political parties likely to cooperate?

To Establish Parameters of the Candidate Event to be held

Once it has been decided to proceed with a candidate event, the following issues should be addressed:

1. What offices should be included?
2. Should the League invite co-sponsors?
3. Will the event be held in-person, virtually or both?
4. What media outlets should be contacted– TV or radio broadcaster, press coverage, web-based outlet?

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE?

Role of the Voter Services Chair and the Committee

The chair is the individual designated by the board to be responsible for all aspects of the candidate event.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Lens

Using a lens of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), the Voter Services chair and committee should consider the following while planning and implementing a candidate event:

- Are key stakeholders meaningfully included in planning – and in the event itself?
- Is this work that impacts a group or community? If so, is their voice represented?
- How diverse is the group of decision makers or planners? Is it diverse enough to meet the needs of the community to be represented?
- Have we considered various, specific marginalized groups and how they might be included in planning or urged to attend?
- Does this align with our vision for an equitable and inclusive organization?
- How is equity addressed?
- What barriers might exist in the way of achieving equity at this event?
- What changes could be made to make this more equitable?
- What are the benefits for members?
- What are the benefits for partners and/or members of the community?
- Have we considered area colleges for inclusion of students in the planning and implementation? Find out what organizations exist on the campuses and work with them to plan and promote the event.

Preliminary Planning

First a decision must be made if the event is to be held in-person, virtually or a combination of both.

Site Selection and Facilities – If the event is to be held in-person, the facility should be centrally located, accessible to all, with adequate public parking and/or access to public transportation available. Site selection should include consideration of possible costs, e.g. rental of an auditorium; rental of sound and audio-visual equipment; availability of live-streaming; rental of chairs, tables, and custodial services. Any expenses should be estimated early in the planning

and brought to the board in a formal budget, before the commitment for a space is made.

Some organizations require Certificates of Insurance from all organizations using their facilities. The LWVNYS carries insurance which covers each local League; contact the LWVNYS office well in advance of your event to discuss insurance needs.

If possible, select a site that has

- adequate size and configuration to allow the audience to see, hear and participate;
- a raised platform, without barriers which separate the audience from the speakers;
- a background suitable for TV cameras and for display of the LWV banner;
- Livestreaming capability (with assistance by facility staff, if possible).

The physical arrangement of the facility will depend on the number of candidates and the format. However, in all situations there should be a draped table, with printed name cards readable by audiences and virtual viewers; lighting suitable for media and/or livestreaming; microphones for speakers and, if necessary, floor mics for audience participation. Among the supplies needed for timekeepers are stopwatches, time cards and reserved front row seats.

Arrangements: Date/Time

Select potential event dates close enough to the election to generate interest but with enough lead time to allow coverage in the local papers and viewings of archived versions.

Know election law deadlines and check with your local county Board of Elections on the date when candidates are certified to assure the inclusion of all candidates.

Check the calendars of candidates, political parties, community organizations, school, legal and religious holidays and major sporting events (e.g. play-offs, World Series) to avoid conflicts. Plan the most suitable day of the week, hour and length of the forum.

Working backwards from the date that is finally selected for the event, the committee should devise a timeline including the deadlines for completion of each phase of the project. The chair is responsible for the progress at each critical date.

Inform all involved of their roles and responsibilities, in writing where necessary.

Coordinate potential event dates with other Leagues sharing the candidates, discuss co-sponsorship, planning and division of responsibilities.

Prepare a display of League publications and membership information.

Planning the Event

- Select a moderator.
- Assign roles for coordination of technology and live-streaming, or for full operations if being held virtually.
- If display of campaign literature is permitted under the Board policy, establish appropriate format, ground rules and policy for displaying campaign literature.
- Formulate questions to ask the candidates.

- If you are setting up an event before the official ballot is set, you can send a “Save the Date” communication to all potential candidates informing them of the proposed date and time of the event and including a copy of the written policy on Candidates Events.
- Invite the candidates. Only those candidates who meet the criteria for inclusion (i.e. inclusion on the official ballot) should receive an invitation to the event. If the initial contact is by telephone, a confirmation letter should be sent reviewing the contents of the telephone conversation. Otherwise the first letter to the candidates can be exploratory. The initial letter of invitation should contain basic information about the debate and the local’s written Candidates Events policy. Once you have obtained the candidates’ written commitment to appear, you can apprise them in writing of the format, ground rules, board policies and the chosen moderator.
- Collect information on all candidates and make it available to the moderator.

Guidelines for Questions for Candidate Events

If the format will include a series of questions to be asked by the moderator or by a panel, consider the following guidelines:

1. Determine how you will solicit questions in advance, by email or on a website, or at the actual event.
2. Questions must be clear, concise and appropriate to the office being sought by the candidates.
3. Questions must be appropriate to all candidates seeking the same office. Keep in mind that an incumbent has more information on some issues than the other candidates and can probably provide more informed answers.
4. Questions should reflect the issues of greatest interest to the entire community and cover a broad range of topics.
5. Word questions so that they cannot be answered by “yes” or “no.”
6. Word questions in a manner that will elicit the political philosophy of each candidate.
7. Questions must not include or imply personal attacks on any candidate.

League program directors may be requested to help formulate questions.

Establish Candidate Event Ground Rules

Ground rules define the limits of the event and the specifics within the chosen forum. If possible, ground rules should be planned with the selected moderator before they are communicated to the candidates and parties. Experienced moderators have more expertise in handling problem situations than either the candidates or the Voter Service Committee and can make cogent suggestions.

Among the issues which should be addressed in advance of the candidate event are:

1. Should the president of the LWV (or of a co-sponsoring organization) or the Voter Service Chair open the event?
2. Will League announcements be made before the Event begins?
3. Will there be opening statements by the candidates or will the event begin with a prepared question?
4. Will questions from the floor be made from floor mics? If so, will ushers be needed to control the microphones? Has the TV cable crew been consulted about the logistics of wiring, traffic flow, etc.? Will the moderator know how to time the final question, despite the line of

questioners at the microphones?

5. Will questions from the audience be made in writing? If so, how and when will the question cards be distributed? collected? screened? given to the moderator?
6. Will questions be received by email or phone from an at-home audience? If so, who will receive the calls? Who will screen them? Who will relay them to the moderator? Without a live audience or a very small one, this format can be handled more easily in a studio setting rather than in a large auditorium. Under all circumstances, there should be a mechanism for screening calls and emails rather than putting them directly on the air or livestreamed. This procedure necessitates planning and coordination between the moderator, the tech staff using the livestreaming, and the media personnel.
7. How long should the event run and what is the time of each segment? Realistic timing of the question period is essential. With multiple candidates, it is important to determine exactly how many responses are possible within the allotted question period.
8. Should there be rebuttals by each candidate to the statements of other candidates or should rebuttals be contained in the closing statements? When there are multiple candidates, rebuttals take a considerable amount of time and limit the number of questions that can be asked. Candidates usually would prefer to answer as many questions as possible and work their rebuttals into answers to subsequent responses or include them in their closing statements.
9. One method of handling rebuttals is by use of a “red card”. Each candidate is provided with a red card(or 2-3 cards), large enough to be easily seen by the moderator, and each candidate is given the opportunity, by raising the card, to speak out of turn in rebuttal to a response from the other candidate. The number of times in which each candidate can use the red card(s) and the length of time of each rebuttal varies based on the number of candidates and projected running time of the debate; this is decided beforehand and is communicated to the candidates in advance of the event.
10. Will the moderator be able to change the amount of time allowed each candidate to answer audience questions after the forum has begun? This is often necessary when time is limited and the audience is interested in continuing. Candidates should be informed ahead of time that the moderator has this discretionary option and the audience should be informed of this possibility before the commencement of the candidate event. It may also be possible to extend the length of the event if the candidates, TV, custodians on site and the audience agree, but this contingency should be worked out ahead of time.
11. League policy on the display or contribution of campaign literature, buttons within the event space should be clearly spelled out and relayed ahead of time to the candidates, party workers and League members who will assist at the forum. Certain venues, such public libraries may have their own policies on this which must be complied with. If the League policy permits display of campaign literature, a sign should be posted in the area in which the literature is displayed which states the nonpartisanship of the League. Such a sign could say:

***The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization.
Candidates and political parties are never supported or opposed.***

Media Involvement

The committee should coordinate with the Publicity or PR chair who will assume responsibility for print, radio and TV coverage. Press advisories should be issued in advance of the event with press releases available on the day and after. Photos and possible articles may be sent to media

lists after the event if coverage wasn't provided. The League's policy on taping and recording should be made available to all as well.

Conducting the Candidate Event

The president represents the League and may open the event. If there are co-sponsors, an equal role should be given to the presidents of each co-sponsoring organization. The banner or logo of each group should be visible to the audience and the TV or live streaming audience.

The moderator oversees the event once they are introduced.

Post event

The committee chair should send letters of thanks to each candidate, the political parties, co-sponsors, the moderator, each committee member and others responsible for the success of the event.

A written evaluation should be made by the committee and the board to assist in future planning.

The chair's report, including copies of candidate letters, contracts, PR clippings, financial report, evaluation etc. should be completed and filed.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MODERATOR?

Once an event is in progress, the moderator is in charge and maintains control from start to finish. The moderator must demonstrate absolute fairness, neutrality and dignity. Because they represent the nonpartisan standards of the League, it is important that the moderator be independent of the local political situation. Therefore, whenever possible, a moderator should be from outside of the immediate community and election district(s) relevant to the forum. **If a moderator does live in the election district, this should be acknowledged in a statement at the beginning of the event as well as a statement saying the moderator will be fair and impartial.**

The moderator should be aware of policy decisions made by the board that impact on the event; be prepared to work within the format, ground rules and site arrangements selected by the committee; be trained in moderating techniques and flexible in making adjustments during the event.

Assistance from the Committee

The moderator should expect that the Committee has provided certain information prior to the event:

1. Details about the arrangements: the date, hour, duration of the event, TV coverage, live streaming details; exact location of the event, driving directions and parking availability.
2. Information about the candidates, their biographies and local newspaper publicity.
3. Information about the expected audience, the size, usual behavior, an accurate appraisal of the temper of the race, "hot issues" and community factions.
4. Copies of League publicity, flyers, invitation letters. The moderator should request these items when moderating for organizations other than the League.

Preparation for the Candidate Event

While the committee works on the details of the event, the moderator's job is to become familiar with the situation s/he will be dealing with at the event. Once the format has been confirmed the Moderator should:

PREPARE A SCRIPT to free the moderator from stress at the event (see samples in Appendices). The framework of the script is the format which the moderator and the committee have worked on and to which the candidates have agreed. It will be divided into sections, dictated by the format but usually includes:

Welcome by the League president or leader of the sponsoring group. The welcoming remarks should include a statement of the League's nonpartisan policy, stress that the moderator is not a stakeholder in the election and introduce the moderator and timekeeper(s). The following preliminary remarks should be delivered by the moderator.

- Introduction of the candidates.
- Explanation of the event's format and ground rules.
- If questions will be submitted in writing by members of the audience, the audience should be advised that similar questions may be combined by the moderator, that questions must be answerable by all candidates.
- Review the policy about taping or videotaping of the event.
- Review the agreement of candidates and their campaigns on not booing, clapping, wearing campaign gear in auditorium, etc.
- Introduction of part one: opening statements or opening questions.
- Introduction of subsequent parts of the forum, including pertinent ground rules.
- Closing statements of the candidates.
- Closure of the event, including a reminder of the date, time and place(s) of the election. Remind the public of candidate information on Vote411.org website. If the event is archived, remind the public of where and how to access the archived event.

Rehearse the script so it comes naturally, with words with which the moderator is comfortable. It should become so familiar that the moderator may use it only as a reference at the forum.

Prepare for the question period with a system for varying the order in which candidates speak or answer. It is important that you use some type of record so you are aware at a glance of the sequence of answers. Some moderators use the grid contained in the Appendix and keep track of the subject of the questions asked in the grid to give the sponsoring organization a record of the topics covered.

If the format calls for written questions, the moderator should ***recommend the use of distinctive cards*** to be given out at the door. This prevents any faction from coming to the forum with questions already formulated.

Some suggestions for responses for situations which might occur during a candidate event are set out in "What If..." in the Appendices.

Before the event begins (for in-person events):

1. Arrive early, with all papers in order. Prepare lots for the candidates to draw to

determine the order for answering questions and for opening and closing statements.

2. Have the agenda, seating chart, pen and the gavel from the local League or sponsoring organization.
3. Welcome the candidates and help put them at ease. Most of them are more nervous than you will ever be. They are really on the line and for many, this is a first-time experience.
4. Prior to the event, call the candidates together to draw lots, go over the ground rules and ask for proper pronunciation of names.
5. If there are candidates who have problems speaking English, are very young or obviously nervous, be extra gracious to them. Give them time to find the right word. Don't jump in and hurry them.

Be very clear about the rebuttal process or the crosstalk process. Let everyone know that you are in charge once the event starts.

Be sure you know what the League's (or sponsoring organization's) policy is regarding audio or videotaping of the event by unauthorized persons and announce this at the beginning of the event. This will avoid misunderstandings and prevent partisan use of debate material.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TEAM DURING IN-PERSON CANDIDATE EVENT?

Other members of the committee who have active roles during the Candidate Event.

1. **Floor Manager.** This is the person who arrives early at the venue to check the mics, chair height, lights, and fire exits. Make sure that security is available. Ask for water and glasses if they have not been provided. Be sure there are name cards visible to the TV cameras, live streaming and the audience.
2. **Greeters** are stationed at the entrance to the venue to welcome members of the public, disseminate League material, enforce the League policy about campaign literature, prevent members of the audience from entering the venue with placards or other material which might be distracting from the forum.
3. **Vetters** review the written questions from the audience to ensure that the handwriting is legible, the question is acceptable and not personal or slanderous, and to group questions in categories to avoid repetition. If the audience is asked to come to the floor microphone, a League member should oversee the mic.
4. The number of **timers** needed/used will vary with the format of the candidate event. The timers should be provided with chairs in the very front of the venue, with good sight distances from the candidates to the timers.
5. Other committee members should be assigned to roam the audience for several purposes: to disseminate and collect cards with questions, to deal with obstreperous audience members, and to seat latecomers.

During virtual Candidate Events, vetters are still needed in advance to review the questions and a timer is needed during the event (and visible on the screen) to keep all informed of timing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH SITUATIONS WHICH COMMONLY ARISE DURING CANDIDATES' EVENTS

WHAT IF.....

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

Interrupt gently, but firmly. "Excuse me, Mr. Candidate, but you have used up your time." You can let people finish their sentences, but some people's sentences never end. If you permit one candidate to go over his/her time, the others will never let you forget it.

...a candidate gets obstreperous or unruly?

Address him/her directly. "Ms. Candidate, you are out of order." "Mr. Candidate. I must remind you once again that you are not being fair to the other candidates." If your admonitions don't work, console yourself with the thought that the evening is accomplishing its purpose: revealing the candidate's true character!

...a member of the audience is rowdy?

Address him/her directly. "Sir, please sit down and wait your turn." or "Please respect the rules we have established so that we may have an orderly discussion of the issues." Usually, your comments and growing peer pressure from the audience will do the trick. If it doesn't, call a brief recess and speak to the rabble rouser yourself. (There have even been occasions, fortunately rare, when a member of the audience was drunk and disorderly and the police had to be summoned.)

...the audience gets unruly during in-person event?

Remind the audience that this is not a rally for voters who have already made up their minds, but a nonpartisan event for those who have not. You can use such comments as: "We understand that many of you have strong feelings about this election (issue), but others have come here tonight to help them decide how to vote. Please let us use our time for discussion of the issues." or "Please, let's not waste time that should be spent discussing the issues."

Remember that you have the authority to call a recess to review the ground rules with the co-sponsors and participants. You even have the authority to decide that conditions just do not exist for a useful discussion of the issues and so to adjourn the event.

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

Calmly restate the ground rules and proceed and remind them that the candidates have all agreed in advance to these rules and procedures. (You can even read from the letter of invitation). If the challenge continues, you can call a recess and caucus with the candidates and sponsors. With careful preparation this shouldn't happen.

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

Rule the question out of order, explaining that we are here for an open, orderly exchange on the issues, not character assassination. Ask for another question.

...a question is really a statement?

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

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

Ask the audience for questions on other topics. "We have had many questions on this topic. Are there members of the audience who wish to question the candidates about other issues?" When the questions are submitted in writing, you and the question sorter can consolidate some of them: "Here we have three questions on the same topic." Better not try to rephrase questions, though. Questioners have great pride of authorship.

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

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

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DEBATE CO-SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES

It is important that the League of Women Voters maintain its nonpartisan position when co-sponsoring a debate. The first step in agreeing to co-sponsorship is to review the other organization's mission statement to ensure that its goals are consistent with those of the League. IF A LEAGUE IS CONTACTED BY ANOTHER ORGANIZATION OR PERSON REQUESTING THAT LEAGUE HOLD OR COSPONSOR A CANDIDATE EVENT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE OTHER'S GOALS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THOSE OF THE LEAGUE. REMEMBER THAT THE LWV BOARD WOULD NEED TO BE CONSULTED AND APPROVE THE EVENT.

Any organization co-sponsoring a debate must meet the following conditions:

- refrain from endorsing candidates or positions prior to or immediately after the debate;
- endorse the League's guidelines for candidate participation;
- agree to accept the League's standards of nonpartisanship and debate quality;
- agree to the League's videotaping policy;
- treat the candidates equitably, and
- agree to issue jointly all press releases, letters and other material circulated to the public.

PROVIDING A MODERATOR AT A NON-LEAGUE EVENT

The League may provide a moderator upon request to an event that is not sponsored or organized by the League. If the sponsoring organization is not following League policies and procedures, the Moderator should announce first thing from the podium that the League is providing only the moderator and that the rules and procedures do not reflect the League's policies but rather those of the sponsoring organization. The League's name should not be listed on any advertisement of the event as a co-sponsor, but the League can be listed as moderating the event.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING JUDICIAL EVENTS

The rules governing the conduct of judicial candidates are more rigid than for others running for political office. The NYS Code of Judicial Conduct prohibits a judicial candidate from making "pledges or promises" of future conduct or decision making other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office.

The moderator of a judicial candidate event should inform the audience that there are restrictions on the topics that these candidates may discuss and request that candidates not be pressured when they cannot answer a specific question. It is advisable to have questions from the audience submitted in writing for screening. If possible, it is very helpful to have an attorney present to screen audience questions. This procedure could prevent awkward situations during question/answer sessions.

Questions to judicial candidates should be limited to their qualifications, experience and philosophy. Examples of suitable questions are:

1. What are your professional qualifications for election to this office?
2. What is your experience? Has it included civil/criminal law?
3. How would you balance the need for judicial independence with the need to raise campaign funds? Would you, for example, accept contributions from attorneys who may appear before you?
4. How would you improve the administration of the judicial system? What measures would you suggest to reduce court congestion and delays? [for administrative judges only]
5. What changes would you suggest to improve the jury system?
6. Do you feel the current public defender system in New York State affords the indigent with competent defense? Why?
7. Do/would you use alternatives to incarceration? Do you feel there are sufficient alternative programs available in this community?

Candidates for Family Court judgeships might be asked:

1. Do you feel Family Court is adequately funded?
2. Are there sufficient support personnel?

MODERATOR TRAINING

LWV WESTCHESTER ILO:

Part 1: Moderator Basics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR9XsyUPqgA>

Part 2: How to Utilize Technology for a Virtual Candidate Forum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPGqpll6tLA>

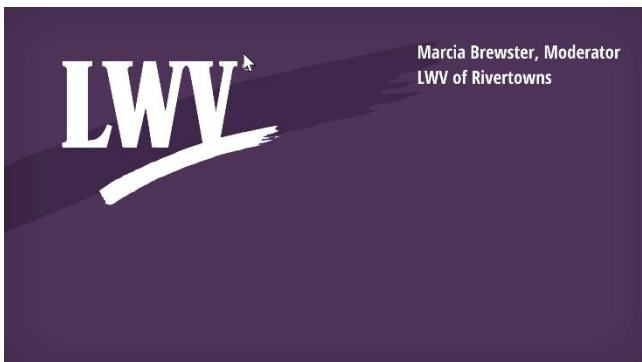
Sample Virtual Candidate Forum:

(Study the way the Moderator conducts the forum; professionalism; good eye contact with the camera; preparedness):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQfNjrEE94w>

SAMPLE VIRTUAL BACKGROUNDS FOR ONLINE/HYBRID CANDIDATE FORUMS

League Volunteers (ie, host, moderator, timekeeper, student presenter) and Candidates



VIRTUAL BACKGROUNDS FOR TIMINGS



INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO USE TIMEKEEPER SLIDES

1. Preload the timer slides and the LWV slide that were emailed to you in Zoom/ Video Backgrounds.
2. When In Zoom Webinar, make sure you are not in Full Screen mode. You may simply click ESC button to ensure you are not in Full Screen mode, or at the right top corner on your screen.
3. Ensure that the LWV slide has been selected and that your webcam is open. (We want to see you when you are introduced at the start.)
4. When the Moderator begins speaking and you will be ready to keep time, cover your webcam (post it note, a sticker, anything to cover just the webcam.) This is IMPORTANT because you do not want to be on camera while displaying timer slides and you will block the graphic.
5. In Zoom, click arrow next to Stop Video. Select Choose Virtual Background. You will see the timer slides and the LWV slide that you preloaded. Always keep this window open until the end of the forum! AND NEVER STOP VIDEO!
6. TIMING GROUND RULES:

- a. Candidate Opening Statement: 1 minute
 - b. Candidate to Answer Question: 1.5 minutes
 - c. Candidate to Rebut a Question: 30 seconds
 - d. Candidate Closing Statement: 1 minute
7. Set your TIMER for either the 1 minute or 1.5 minutes after the Moderator invites the Opening/Closing Statements or to Answer a Question. (Rebuttal is 30 seconds.)

When you get to about 35 seconds, change your video background to 30 seconds (there could be a time delay for candidates to see the timer slide)

At about 3-5 seconds, change your video background to STOP. (same)

8. You will be toggling back and forth between these three slides throughout the candidate forum.

PROMOTING MODERATOR RECRUITMENT

Website, e-blast, social media

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY

BECOME A CANDIDATE FORUM MODERATOR

ONLINE TRAINING AVAILABLE

- TRAINING MODULES
- MODERATOR TOOLKIT
- RECORDED FORUMS
- LWVW COACH

ALL THE TOOLS YOU NEED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MODERATOR

520 White Plains Rd., Suite 500
Tarrytown, NY 10591

914-366-7312 lwv.org

APPENDIX: TOOLS THAT YOU WILL NEED

A. SAMPLE SAVE THE DATE LETTER FOR A CANDIDATE EVENT

The League of Women Voters of _____ (and add any co-sponsor) is/are planning a "Meet the Candidates Night," for [INSERT RACE(S)] _____ in the [INSERT NAME] election to be held at the [INSERT PLACE] on either [INSERT DATES]. We are inviting you to participate in our event.

Only candidates whose names are on the _____ County Board of Elections ballot may participate in the event. This will include the candidates of major and minor parties in the district. We are aware that the ballot has not yet been certified but we are sending this information to potential candidates so that you can enter our event in your calendar. If a candidate becomes decertified for the ballot, the invitation to participate in the candidate event will be rescinded.

We will circulate Candidate Event rules to all candidates prior to the event which will include our "empty chair" policy that states at least two candidates for each race must appear for the event to be held. Prior to the event, we ask that you agree to and sign off on the rules.

The League of Women Voters is a nonprofit, nonpartisan political organization whose primary purpose is to promote the informed and active participation of citizens in their government. League-sponsored candidate events serve to: educate the public, motivate voters to participate in the elections, and give voters a chance to hear the views of the candidates. The League never supports or opposes candidates or political parties.

We look forward to your participation in this event. By sharing your views with the electorate, they will be able to make an educated choice on their ballots. Please confirm your availability for one or both possible event dates.

Please respond to me as soon as possible by phone or email. The League of Women Voters of _____ (and the co-sponsor _____) look forward to hosting this event and widely publicizing it to voters, and all other interested residents.

Sincerely yours,

[contact person, contact info]

B. SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO CANDIDATES TO CANDIDATE EVENT – Primary Election

Re: LWV “Meet the Candidates Night,” [date time and place]

Dear (CANDIDATE NAME),

The League of Women Voters of _____ (“LWV”) is pleased to invite you to participate in a “Meet the Candidates Night.” We are inviting all _____ Party certified candidates approved to run for the office of [insert office] to participate.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that promotes participation of citizens in government. The League does not support any political party or candidate. The League of Women Voters has had a long and successful history of running “Meet the Candidate Nights” throughout the country for many years. This forum will provide the public with the opportunity to hear the candidates’ views on issues important to the constituents of [the _____ Congressional District] and to generate excitement for getting out the vote.

Enclosed is a copy of the “Ground Rules for League of Women Voters Candidate Nights.” Every effort is made to give each candidate the opportunity to express his/her views. We look forward to your agreement to participate in the forum, and to your acceptance of our rules. Please confirm your participation and sign your agreement to our procedures. The signed agreement should be sent to [address _____] no later than _____.

We hope this will facilitate your preparation and provide a framework for your interaction with the audience.

We are looking forward to meeting you at [address _____], no later than _____pm. If you have any questions, feel free to call or e-mail us. Our contact information is below.

Thank for your willingness to participate.

Sincerely yours,

[contact person, contact info]

Enc.: Ground Rules for League of Women Voters Candidate Nights

C. SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO CANDIDATES TO CANDIDATE EVENT – General Election

To [Candidate] for _____ Race
 Re: [Event Name e.g. Meet the Candidates' Night] [date]

Dear (Candidate Name),

The League of Women Voters of _____ invites you to [Event Name] on [day, date, and time]. We are inviting all the candidates on the ballot for the **[offices]**. The event will be held at [place], and will be open to all members of the public and the media.

The event will be divided into _____ segments, with [describe order of debates] ending at approximately _____ p.m.

Please note:

- Our Empty Chair policy requires that two or more candidates for each race must be present.
- Some events will be taped and the video will be made available on the League website; no candidate or other organization may tape or record the event without the League's permission.

We will start the evening with opening remarks from the Moderator. Our format for each segment thereafter will be as follows:

- Candidates' opening statements of no more than 2 minutes
- Moderator will ask written questions collected from the audience
- Candidates' answers will be no more than 1½ minutes
- Each candidate will be given two red cards to be used in the Question-and-Answer period. Each card will allow an additional 1½ minutes to add to your response or to respond to something another candidate has said. Red cards may not be used during the opening or closing statements.
- Candidates' closing statements of no more than 1 minute each

Candidates and audience members will be strongly encouraged to focus on the issues, not personalities. No personal attacks will be allowed. Candidates are asked not to distribute campaign literature inside the event venue. Campaign signs, hats, pins, etc. are also not allowed.

We request that candidates arrive **no later than** _____ p.m.

Thank you to those who have already agreed to attend. **Please confirm your attendance and acceptance of the rules by email or phone call to [contact person, contact info and last date to respond].**

We look forward to your agreement to participate so that voters can make an informed decision on November_____.

Sincerely yours,
 [name of contact person and contact info]

D. SAMPLE EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

League of Women Voters _____

_____ School Board Candidate Event

Sun, May 17, 3:02 PM

Dear School Board Candidates,

I am pleased to invite you to participate in a _____ School Board Candidates Forum. The Forum will be conducted via Zoom video conferencing on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. The Forum will be hosted by the League of Women Voters of the _____ and co-sponsored by the _____ PTSA.

If you intend to participate, please confirm by replying to this email.

Attached please find the Ground Rules and Format and the Video Recording Policy and Release Form. The Release Form must be signed and returned PRIOR to the day of the event for you to participate.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.
Best Regards,

President, LWV of _____

E. SAMPLE VIDEO-RECORDING POLICY FOR CANDIDATES AND VENUES

- a. The content of this forum is owned by the League of Woman Voters of _____
- b. Only the videographer authorized by the League may record this forum.
- c. Any use of the authorized recording requires the advanced approval of the League of Women Voters of _____, except other local Leagues may post the recordings on their websites. Only licensed media, including TV, radio, and newspapers, are entitled to air portions of this recording.
- d. No one is permitted to edit footage for any purpose.
- e. The League of Women Voters of _____ will post recordings of the (Candidate Event) in its entirety on League media.
- f. All party chairs and candidates will sign a release form stating that they have read and accepted the conditions stated above.

Agreed and accepted by

Candidate Name

Candidate Signature

Date

F. SAMPLE VIDEO POLICY RELEASE FORM
VIDEO RECORDING POLICY & RELEASE FORM

- 1) The content of this Candidates' Night is owned by the League of Women Voters of _____.
- 2) The event will be recorded by _____ and will be available for subsequent viewing via various online platforms through Election Day.
- 3) Only the videographer authorized by the League may record this Candidates' Night. Under no circumstances may the candidates or their surrogates record the proceedings.
- 4) Only licensed media, including TV, radio, and newspapers, are entitled by FCC regulations to air portions of this recording. Anyone else who broadcasts or streams this recording must request permission from the League and must air it in its entirety.
- 5) The live stream may not be recorded or reused without authorization from the League. No one is permitted to edit footage for campaign purposes or any other purpose.
- 6) Other Leagues may post the recording on their websites.
- 7) Candidates are permitted to provide a link to the League's recording, in campaign materials or online.

Your signature below acknowledges that you have been informed of these policies and have no objections. For you to participate, LWV of _____ must receive the signed form PRIOR to the day of the Candidates' Night.
Please return this form by email to _____

I acknowledge that I have received and read the Video Recording Policy of the League of Women Voters of _____. I understand that I am responsible for complying with the requirements set forth therein in my capacity as an invited participant in a League of Women Voters of _____ Candidates' Night.

Accepted by: _____ Date: _____
Candidate signature

G. SAMPLE INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES IN ADVANCE OF A VIRTUAL EVENT

In preparation for the [Assembly District #93 Candidates Event on June 1st at 7pm](#), please review the following information:

1. There will be a **brief Zoom meeting on [June 1st at 10am](#)** with all candidates and the moderator to prepare for the upcoming event. At this time, lots will be drawn to determine speaking order during the event. It is also an opportunity to check your video and audio connections, lighting, and background. Lots will be drawn, and order determined even if not all candidates are present. This meeting will be recorded.
2. You will receive a [Zoom](#) invitation to the Candidates Event within the next few days. **The meeting URL received is CANNOT BE SHARED. It is for the Candidate ONLY.** Please save it to your calendar on the date/time of the event.
3. Please remember that during the Candidates Event, you will be always on camera and visible to the audience (just as you would in an in-person event). Please check your physical background and lighting prior to the event. No campaign materials are to be displayed in the background. We strongly discourage you from getting up and moving around during the forum.
4. Please provide your cell phone number as an emergency contact in case of technical difficulties during the Candidates Event.
5. On the night of the event, if you are unable to connect to Zoom or if you unexpectedly lose your connection, please contact [League Volunteer at XXX-XXX-XXXX](#) so that they can contact our technical team to help you.
6. The Candidates Event will be open for you to sign in 30 minutes prior to the event. Please login at that time as it will be the final preparation before the audience joins the event.
7. **All media release forms must be signed and are due by [Sunday, 5/31/20](#), for you to participate.**

Please advise if you have any questions.

(Your name)
(Title, League name)

H. SAMPLE EMAIL INVITATION TO PRACTICE SESSION

League of Women Voters _____

Thu, Jun 4, 9:01 AM

bcc: xxxxxxxxxx

Dear Candidates,

You will receive an invitation to join a Zoom meeting on **Sunday morning, June 7, at 10:00 a.m.** to practice for the **afternoon** forum. This will be useful for introductions, microphone checks, advice for visual framing, and any instructions necessary to ensure a smooth event. It should take no longer than half an hour.

Please advise if you have any questions.

Regards,

(Name)

(Title, League name)

I. SAMPLE CONFIRMATION LETTER TO CANDIDATES FOR VIRTUAL EVENT

Dear Candidates,

Once again, thank you for your willingness to serve your community. Citizens like you keep our democracy strong.

The League of Women Voters of (name of Local League) is delighted that you have agreed to participate in our candidates' forum, which will be held on Wednesday, Date, 2020:

- Senate candidates' forum begins at 7:00pm — please join us on Zoom by 6:30pm — “Go Dark” about 6:50pm
- Assembly candidates' forum begins at 8:30pm — please join us on Zoom by 8:10pm — “Go Dark” about 8:25pm

We will admit all candidates for the same office from the “waiting room” at the same time. Please be prompt so we can ensure that audio and video are working, review how the forum will run, and answer any questions.

We will ask you to mute yourself and turn your camera off for up to ten minutes prior to start time so that we can set up the live-streaming links and have viewers ready to begin on time. This “go dark” phase is critical for us; we need you to be in the Zoom meeting and ready prior to going dark.

As you know, the forum will be held virtually, which means you need a computer with a camera and a microphone and a strong internet connection. If you are not familiar with Zoom, you may want to practice with family and friends. We will ask you during the forum to turn your camera and mike on and off. (Someone near you could assist you if that would be easier.)

The League will livestream the forum on our LWV website: _____

Questions may be submitted to the League either before or during the forum through these links:

[Link for questions to Senate candidates:](#)

[Link for questions to Assembly candidates:](#)

When you publicize the live-stream forum directing constituents to our URL, you may want to include the link for questions at the same time. The moderator will receive questions electronically before and during the forum, just as we have done with index cards in the past.

Both the candidates and League members running the forum will be participants in the Zoom meeting that will be live-streamed to viewers. We will send you the Zoom link a day or so before the event. Entry into the Zoom meeting (unlike public access to the live-stream for viewers) will be restricted, so please do not share the Zoom link we send you.

Attached are the rules and procedures for the meeting. Please return a signed copy via email. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or write.

Sincerely,

Voter Service Chairperson,

League of Women Voters of Name of Local League

Home Phone: (###) ###-####; Cell Phone: (###) ###-####; Email:

J. SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCING A CANDIDATE EVENT

For Immediate Release
Date _____

Contact: _____
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

NEWS RELEASE

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF _____
INVITES PUBLIC TO LWV [CANDIDATE EVENT]
[insert day, date, time and place]

To enable voters to hear the candidates and question them about important issues in the Tuesday, [insert date] Election, the League of Women Voters of _____ is sponsoring a debate/forum/event on [date, time, and place.] At least two candidates for each race must be present or that portion of the program will be cancelled. [LIST CANDIDATES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER]

Event format consists of the candidates making timed opening and closing statements and answering questions submitted by a panel of local media and the League, as well as by the audience.

The event is organized by the League of Women Voters of _____.

Further information is available from the League at [PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL.]

###

K. SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FOR VIRTUAL EVENT

(Date)

League of Women Voters _____

Contact: *League of Women Voters of the* _____ *(insert phone and/or email)*

**League of Women Voters of the _____ to Hold Live
Virtual Forum for **Primary Candidates in Assembly District _____****

The League of Women Voters of the _____ will host a forum via Zoom for candidates running in the June 23 Democratic Primary to represent the ____ Assembly District. The district consists of the Towns of _____.

The Forum is scheduled for Sunday, June 7, 2020, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. The candidates include _____.

The event will be recorded and made available on the _____ League web site: [www._____](http://www._____.) and on the _____ League Facebook page through June 23.

There will be no audience participation. Questions must be submitted in advance and will be vetted by League members who will submit them to the moderator of the Forum.

The public can preregister for the live forum at https://_____ and may submit questions until **noon on Saturday, June 6,** https://_____.

L. SAMPLE GROUND RULES FOR AN IN-PERSON CANDIDATE EVENT

ORAL or WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF _____ CANDIDATES' NIGHT [DATE TIME AND PLACE]

GROUND RULES

Please arrive early and introduce yourself to LWV personnel so that drawing by lot may be done and timekeeping procedures may be explained. **There will be no substitutes or stand-ins for the candidates.** Campaign literature, banners or signs will not be permitted. Candidates are not allowed to wear campaign gear, including t-shirts or hats, to the event.

Drawing by Lot: Candidates will draw numbers to determine the order or presentation of opening and closing statements. (The League will decide if the opening and closing statements are given in the same order or reversed.) If there are two candidates, the candidate drawing #1 will speak first for the opening and closing statements; the candidate drawing #2 will speak second for the opening and closing statements.

Meeting Format: The format for the meeting is on a separate sheet.

Introductions: The Moderator will introduce the candidates using the title of "Mr." and "Ms." or as agreed to by all candidates.

Opening Statement: Each candidate will have a maximum of two minutes to present an opening statement.

Question/Answer Session: A question and answer period for each office will include questions from the League and the audience. Before questions are taken from the audience, the League may ask a question of all the candidates. The questions will not be made available to the candidates before the forum.

Oral Questions from the Audience: Members of the audience will identify themselves by name and specify to whom they wish to address their question although all candidates must have the opportunity to answer all questions. All questions will be oral. Questions will be brief (no more than one minute) and pertinent. Speeches from the floor will not be permitted. No member of the audience will be allowed to ask a second question until all other questions have been entertained. The Moderator will have the right to rule on all questions and may restate the question. All questions must be answerable by all candidates, and each candidate will have the opportunity to answer each question.

-OR-

Written Questions from the Audience: Cards will be distributed by volunteers from the League of Women Voters to the audience for questions. League members will collect and vet the cards to make sure that they are legible, relevant, and not repetitive, or abusive. All questions must be answerable by all candidates, and each candidate will have the opportunity to answer each question.

Answers from Candidates: Responses to questions will be limited to a maximum of two minutes. The candidates may not interrupt each other, or make personal attacks.

Closing Statement: Closing statements are limited to one minute and should be related to matters covered at the forum.

Time Keeping: A timekeeper will hold up signs signaling candidates when “1 minute” remains, when “30 seconds” remain, and when to “STOP”. Candidates are expected to respect and comply with time limits and the Moderator will strictly enforce those limits.

Physical Arrangements: Candidates will sit and speak from a table on the dais. Microphones will be available.

Applause: The audience will be asked to hold their applause until the end of each segment of the program. Unruly members of the audience will be asked to leave the event; the event will be stopped or even cancelled if outbursts, applause, and other distracting noises are not stopped.

Empty Chair Debates: The LWV does not permit ‘empty chair’ debates; at least 2 candidates for each race must be present.

M. SAMPLE FORMAT FOR AN IN-PERSON CANDIDATE EVENT

7:30 Welcome, opening remarks, introduction of the Moderator by the president or Voter Service chair.

7:35 Moderator introduces the candidates and explains the format:

1. Each candidate will make a two (or other time limit to be determined by the hosting League) minute opening statement; order determined by drawing lots before the meeting.
2. Timekeeper will hold up sign when 30 seconds remain and stand when the time is up.
3. After all opening statements, questions will be taken from the audience.
4. Applause should be held until the end of the forum, leaving more time for questions.

7:38 Opening Statements.

7:52 Moderator explains rules governing the question period.

If Oral Questions:

1. Questioners will be asked to stand (or go to the microphone), state their name and address, succinctly state question. All candidates may answer all questions.
2. Issues, not personalities, are to be addressed; no personal/abusive questions are to be asked.
3. Speeches from the floor will not be permitted. Questions are limited to **one minute**.
4. The Moderator has the right to rule on all questions.
6. Candidates will be limited to answers not exceeding **two (or other time limit) minutes**.

If Written Questions:

1. Cards will have been collected from audience members and vetted by League members to make sure they are legible, relevant, and not repetitive, or abusive.
2. Cards will continue to be collected during the event; audience members will be asked to raise their hands if they have a card to submit.
3. The order of responses for each question will be rotated so that everyone gets a chance to respond first.

7:55 Questions from the audience.

8:30 Closing statements; each candidate may have up to two (or other time limit) minutes for a closing statement.

8:45 Moderator closes the meeting with a reminder to vote on Election Day.

N. SAMPLE PANEL FORMAT

LWV President or Chair opens the meeting and introduces the Moderator.

The Moderator introduces the panel members and the candidates and outlines the format.

Part I: Opening statements

Part II: Questions from the panel

The same question may be asked of each candidate with a two (or other time limit) minute response; each candidate will have the opportunity to respond and the order of responses will be rotated for each question.

Part III: Closing

Variation: Plan for questions from the audience; limit questions to one minute. Questions may be directed to one or all candidates, but all candidates may respond.

O: SAMPLE FORM FOR CANDIDATE QUESTIONS FOR ASSEMBLY SEAT

Questions to Assembly Candidates

LWV PWM Virtual Forums – Questions should be civil, relevant to the public and campaign, and brief. Your question will be considered but may not be asked. The limited time of the forum constrains how many questions may be asked.

What is your name? (will not be shared with candidate or public) *

Short answer text

What town/city/village do you live in? (Might be shared) *

Short answer text

What Forum (Candidates) is your question for? *

NY Assembly 20 – Miller v. Marks – Tuesday, Oct 13, at 8:30

NY Assembly 15 – Montesano v Sackman – Thursday, Oct 22, at 7:00pm

Please write ONE question here *

Long answer text

The answers come (automatically) into a shared Sheet:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Timestamp	Questioner Name	What Forum (Candidates) is your question for?	Please write ONE question here	Please write ONE question here (optional)	What is your name? (will not be shared with candidate or public)	What town/city/village do you live in? (Might be shared)	
9/11/2020 12:57:23		NY Senate 7 – Franklin, Kaplan	???????		Michele Lamberti	Port Washington	
9/11/2020 15:51:27		NY Senate 7 – Franklin, Kaplan	Did you get any sleep last night?	why do you want this job?	Nancy Cowles	Port Washington	
9/11/2020 16:11:36		NY Senate 7 – Franklin, Kaplan	What is your top priority?		Judy TJ	Manhasset	
9/11/2020 13:54:16		NY Assembly 13 – Lavine, Monteleone	Will you disavow QAnon right now, here tonight?		Julie Meer	Port Washington	
9/17/2020 13:49:37		NY Senate 5 – Gaughran, Smyth, Wagner	Do you believe the groundwater contamination at the Northrop Grumman facility is being handled appropriately?		Isaak Heon	Plainview	
9/24/2020 19:57:21		NY Senate 5 – Gaughran, Smyth, Wagner	Testing: Who is getting these e-mails? I'm working on publicity for the 2 LWV forums, so would like to know where they are.		Lynda Adams	Port Washington	

P: SAMPLE MODERATOR SCRIPT FOR AN IN-PERSON CANDIDATE EVENT

My name is _____. I am a member of the League of Women Voters of _____ . I live in the town of _____ and I will be your Moderator tonight.

Tonight is your opportunity to listen to all the ____ (insert race) _____ Candidates who are on the ballot and to hear their views on the issues. (If this has been arranged: Note that we are live streaming this evening's event to an at home.

Before we begin tonight I want to remind everyone to please turn off all personal electronic equipment.

The League is a nonpartisan, political organization dedicated to the informed and responsible participation of citizens in government. The League never supports or opposes any political party or candidate; this has been our policy for over 100 years. Membership is open to anyone who is 16-years and older. Please consider joining the League.

The League has produced an online voters' guide including statements from all the candidates in the _____ races. All candidates who responded to the League queries are included on our website. (Mention VOTE411.org.)

I realize that many of the people in the audience tonight may support one candidate over another. However, I will insist that the candidates and the audience treat each other with respect. Personal attacks will not be allowed.

If the audience is submitting questions on cards: (NB: Some of the cards will have already been collected.):

Thank you for submitting your questions. We will continue to collect your cards during the event. Please raise your hand when you have one for us to collect. We are reviewing them to avoid repetitive or non-relevant questions. The order of candidate responses will be rotated, so that everyone gets a chance to respond first.

If the audience is asking questions orally:

It is the job of the audience to listen and to ask questions at the appropriate time. We ask that you all listen respectfully to each candidate's answers. Please try not to repeat a subject that has been asked before. In the interest of time, please hold applause to the end of the event. Bear in mind that we may not have time for all the questions. This meeting will conclude at 9:00 p.m. or sooner.

The Timekeeper for this evening's event is seated in the front row. They will hold up cards for the candidates to glance at. Green means 1minute left; Yellow means 30 seconds and Red means Stop - time is up. (Some leagues just use the 30 seconds warning, and then Stop.

The format for this evening will be as follows:

Opening statements from candidates (**no more than 2 minutes**) followed by the audience's questions.

The audience is reminded to ask a question, not make a statement. With that in mind, we remind you that there is a 1-minute limit for posing questions. Please remember to make your questions pertinent to the office, and addressed to all candidates. If a question is directed to one candidate, the other candidates may respond if they wish. Each person may ask one question and must wait until all others have had a chance before asking a second question, if there is still time. If you want to ask a question please come forward and wait in line. [If this has been arranged; the at home audience may type in their question as we go. It will be put in a queue and will be asked by a League member when their turn comes]

- Questions will be directed to candidates in rotation, so that everyone gets a chance to respond first.
- (OPTIONAL) Candidates have been given two red cards to be used in the Question and Answer period. Each card will allow an additional 1½ minutes to add to your remarks or to respond to something another candidate has said. It may not be used during opening or closing statements.
- Closing statements will be no more than 1 minute each.

The candidates for _____ (insert race) in alphabetical order are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

It is time for their opening statements of no more than 2 minutes. The candidates drew lots to determine their order. The first speaker during opening statements will also be first during closing statements. We will hear from _____ first.

Now we will hear from _____.
Now we will hear from _____.

Now we will get to the questions from the audience. Candidates are reminded that they have 1½ minutes to answer. A candidate is not required to answer if he/she does not wish to.

We will start with____(use your Grid on the next page) ... Now we will hear from ... etc.

(At 8:45, announce that)

“This will be the last question before closing statements”.

Before we hear the closing statements, I wish to thank you all for demonstrating your civic concern by attending this event. And I want to thank the candidates and the audience for the respect you showed throughout the evening. Don’t forget to pick up the League information from the literature table.

There is information about the ballot and budget proposals in the online guide at _____.

And don’t forget to vote on Tuesday, _____. The polls will be open from _____. Again, thank you for coming.

**SAMPLE GRID FOR QUESTIONS/ANSWERS
FOR BOTH IN PERSON AND VIRTUAL**

	Candidate #1	Candidate #2	Candidate #3	Candidate #4
Question 1	1	2	3	4
Question 2	4	1	2	3
Question 3	3	4	1	2
Question 4	2	3	4	1
Question 5	1	2	3	4

Etc.

AS EACH QUESTION IS ASKED, THE MODERATOR MARKS THE SEQUENCE # OF THE RESPONDENT BENEATH THAT CANDIDATE’S NAME. AFTER FIVE QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE, THE GRID SHOULD LOOK LIKE THE ABOVE.

**Q. SAMPLE TIMELINE AND MODERATOR SCRIPT FOR VIRTUAL EVENT
DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY of the NYS ___ ASSEMBLY DISTRICT**

June 9, 2020 | 7:00-8:30 pm | Zoom Webinar

6:15 Setup

- 6:15 Arrive on site
- 6:25 Arrange background
- 6:30 Start Webinar and check audio and video for candidates and media representative

results of draw

First on Opening Statement: _____

First Question: _____

6:45: [START SCREEN SHARE]

7:00 Welcome and Introductions [STOP SCREEN SHARE]

Welcome

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of _____, welcome to our virtual Candidates Debate, which is for the **Democratic Primary election for the New York State 121st Assembly District.**

My name is _____, and I will be your moderator tonight. Joining me in running tonight’s debate are League members ___ to keep track of time, _____ to gather and organize emailed questions from the audience, and _____ to manage our audio settings.

Logistics/Housekeeping

[START SCREEN SHARE SLIDE 2]

Let me quickly review a few logistics with all of you:

- [CLICK] For those of you in our audience, if you wish to ask questions, email them to _____. This email will be visible throughout the debate. Please include your name, the town you’re from, and to which candidate you are addressing your question. If it’s both candidates, just write both, or we’ll assume that it is for both.
- [CLICK] For those of you in the audience who are familiar with the Zoom platform, we have intentionally removed a number of features: chat, Q&A, audience video and audio.
- [CLICK] This debate is being recorded. The recording will be made available on the Oneonta League’s Website by the end of the week.

[STOP SCREENSHARE]

Press/Media

In addition to our candidates, we are joined on the panel by _____.

About the League

This meeting has been planned and is conducted by the _____, representing the _____ areas.

For over 100 years, the League has empowered voters and defended democracy. Over the last century, we have fought for election protection and equal access to the ballot—all while maintaining our commitment to nonpartisanship and fostering an informed electorate.

The League is a non-partisan, political organization. We are non-partisan and do not support or oppose political parties or candidates. And we are political in that we believe democracy is not a spectator sport and that all citizens need to educate themselves and participate in our democracy. When not engaged in organizing and hosting Candidates Events, League members study issues and policies, come to member agreement, and then advocate based on those decisions.

We are a diverse organization offering membership to EVERYONE over the age of 16.

Tonight, we have with us the 2 candidates for the Democratic Primary election of the New York State _____ Assembly District.

- [CLICK] The New York State Assembly is the lower chamber of the New York State Legislature, which, [CLICK] along with the New York State Senate, works with the governor of New York to create laws and establish a state budget.
- Legislative authority and responsibilities of the New York State Assembly include passing bills on public policy matters, setting levels for state spending, raising and lowering taxes, and voting to uphold or override gubernatorial vetoes.
- [CLICK] There are 150 seats in the New York State Assembly.
- [CLICK] Each Assembly Member represents an average of _____ people.
- [CLICK] Assembly members serve 2-year terms and are not subject to term limits.
- [CLICK] To eligible to serve in the New York State legislature, members must be New York State residents for 5 years and residents of their district for 12 months.
- [NEXT SCREEN] The _____^t Assembly District includes _____ County and parts of _____ counties.

[STOP SCREEN SHARE]

The candidates, in alphabetical order by last name, are:

Ground Rules

The ground rules for this evening have been reviewed in advance by our candidates. Each candidate will **have 4** minutes for an opening statement, the order of which was determined by a draw. Candidates may choose not to use all **4** minutes.

[Timekeeper, show signs as I mention them.] The timekeeper will hold up a sign on his screen when **1 minute, 30 seconds, and 15 seconds remain**; and a **stop sign** when time is up. After opening statements have been made, questions for the candidates will be taken from the audience.

At the end of the question period, candidates will be able to make a brief, **2**-minute closing statement. Again, candidates may choose not to use all **2** minutes. We are scheduled to conclude at **8:30 pm**.

Opening Statements

- 7:07 And now the opening statement from _____
- 7:12 Thank you, Candidate _____.
- And now the opening statement from _____.
- 7:17 Thank you, Candidate _____.

**Questions from the Audience and Media Representative
Ground Rules for the Question Period**

Now we'll move to the questions from the audience and our media representative. As stated earlier, for those of you in the audience, if you have not done so already, please use the email address on your screen to send in your questions for the candidates.

Candidates will be limited to answers not to exceed **2** minutes. Candidates may decline to answer a question if they choose. Candidates wishing to answer questions not addressed to them may signal the moderator and gain the floor—for no longer than **2 minutes**. If a candidate wishes to follow up, they may do so for **1 minute**, at the discretion of the moderator.

Only questions pertaining to the issues will be allowed, and although controversy and differing opinions are welcome, no personal or abusive questions or comments are permitted. These individuals have put themselves before the public by running for public office and that alone is a public service that must be respected.

The emailed questions are being reviewed and collated, so it is possible your question may be slightly reworded if it is similar to someone else's. We are focusing laser-like on asking questions of the candidates; so, if you send a statement without a question, we will not read it. Should you wish to express your opinion on a subject with one of the candidates, we ask that you do so by contacting them directly. We will get to as many questions as possible, as time allows.

The order for the response to the first question was determined by a draw, with _____ going first.

Candidate Order for Answers

	Q	Order	Topic	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2,1	(A)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	1,2	(M)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	2,1	(A)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	1,2	(A)	1.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	2,1	(A)	2.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	1,2	(M)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	2,1	(A)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	1,2	(A)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	2,1	(A)	

8:05 ten-minute mark

It's 8:05, so we have about 10 more minutes for questions to be posed.

8:15 summary of topics

In the past _____ minutes, we have discussed the following topics: [Use list from previous page]

8:20 Closing Statements

We'll now ask for a **3-minute** closing statement from each candidate, if you wish to do so. The order of the closing statements is the reverse of the opening statements.

8:21 And now the closing statement from _____.

8:24 And now the closing statement from _____.

8:30 Thank you to the candidates, _____, **Daily Star managing editor Robert Cairns**, my fellow League members working behind the scenes, and to the audience for making this a valuable and informative and engaging event.

[SCREEN SHARE SLIDE 7]

As we shared earlier, here is the voting information for the **June 23 election**.

- **Early voting starts in 4 days and continues until 2 days before the election. Check your county board of elections for times and places**
- **June 16, a week from today, is the last day to postmark a **mailed-in application** for absentee ballot**
- **June 22, the day before the election: If you want to **apply in person** for an absentee ballot, this is the last day to do so. For those who are mailing in their absentee ballot, this is the last day to **mail your ballot**.**

- June 23 is election day, with polls open 6 am to 9 pm. It's also the last day to deliver your **absentee ballot in person**.
 - For more information, go to vote411.org and lwny.org.
- [NEXT SCREEN SLIDE 8]

If you wish to contact the candidates or the league, here's how to reach us.
Again, thank you and good night.

R: SAMPLE TIPS FOR CANDIDATES WHO ARE NOT AS FAMILIAR WITH ZOOM

You will need:

- Stable internet connection, and a Computer/Device with camera and microphone
- Plain (boring) background — avoid “virtual” backgrounds unless you have a strong network signal
- Place your camera between you and a light source — so that your face is illuminated
- Ensure your face is fully on camera

To ensure your audio and image are high-quality and to reduce odds of your “freezing” during the forum (which will mean your viewers will not hear everything you say), please consider:

- Having your Zooming device close to your router (not on a different floor) or hard-wiring it (with a co-axial cable) and/or checking with your Internet Service Provider as to how much bandwidth you have
- Asking all family members to turn off streaming devices while you are participating in the forum (e.g., video games, movies) because such streaming will reduce the bandwidth available to you
- After joining the Zoom meeting, connecting to audio by phone (not computer) so your bandwidth is only handling the video portion of your Zoom connection

If you are a novice at Zoom:

- Consider rehearsing with friends
 - Do mic check for volume — how close must you sit to be easily heard?
 - Do camera/image check
 - Does all your face show?
 - Is your camera about even with your eyes?
 - Is your face evenly illuminated? (Do you need light behind the camera?)
 - Locate the following controls on Zoom
 - Mute/Unmute (“Mute” means your mic is “hot;” “Unmute means it is off)
 - Stop Video/Start Video (“Start Video” means your camera is off)
 - Rename yourself (to ensure the name you want is displayed to viewers)
- Consider having a family member with you during the forum to help, as necessary

Please join the Candidate Forum at least 20 minutes before the Forum is scheduled to start

- LWV volunteers will ask you to
 - Do a mic check and camera check, ensuring that you are audible and visible
 - Mute/Unmute and Start Video/Stop Video — so you can manage these during the forum (or perhaps have a family member/friend inconspicuously do it for you)
- LWV will
 - Determine a sequence of speaking
 - Review how the timing will work
 - Answer questions you may have
- When these checks are complete, you may mute your microphone and turn off your camera until the start time — but please do not exit the meeting

Between 5 and 10 minutes before the scheduled start time

- You will be asked to mute your mic and stop your camera
- During this time, recording and live-streaming will start to the advertised site(s)

At (or about) the scheduled time

- The Moderator will welcome viewers, lead the Pledge of Allegiance, and review the Procedures the candidates have agreed to
- When the Moderator asks you to turn on your camera, please turn on your camera and unmute yourself. Now viewers of the live-stream will be able to see and hear you. This will be followed by opening statements, Q&A, and closing statements.

At the end, you may wave goodbye (if you wish) before exiting the meeting

S: SAMPLE CO-SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT FOR CANDIDATE EVENT

[This agreement may be in the form of a letter from one sponsor to the other. Both organizations should retain a signed copy until after the forum.]

This document signifies agreement between the Co-Sponsor _____ and The League of Women Voters of _____ to jointly sponsor a School Board Candidates' Forum. Further, this outlines the division of responsibilities previously agreed upon.

The meeting will be held on (date), at (time). at (place).

Both sponsors have agreed not to endorse any candidate prior to or immediately after the forum.

The Co-Sponsor will:

- Provide a written invitation to each candidate to be sent by e-mail as an attachment.
- Accompanying the invitation will be an acceptance form.
 - The candidate will be instructed to print and retain a copy of the acceptance and return a hard copy to the League, or scan and send by e-mail to the League.
- Accompanying the invitation will be the Ground Rules agreed upon by both organizations.
- All communication will be sent by e-mail.
- All publicity will include the name of the Co-Sponsor and the League
- Provide paper and pencils for questions from the audience, or provide mics for questions from the audience, depending upon how the Co-Sponsor wants questions to be asked of candidates.
- Provide microphones for the Moderator and candidates.
- Provide identification cards (tent cards) for each candidate at the table so the audience knows the names of all the candidates.
- Provide water for all candidates.

The League will:

- Provide the Moderator and the timekeeper.
- Formulate equitable ground rules.
- Provide a committee to formulate questions for the candidates.
- Provide a committee to collect and screen questions submitted in writing by the audience.
- Provide refreshments for a social hour that will follow the forum.

Chairperson, Co-sponsor

Date

Chairperson, League of Women Voters

Date

T: SAMPLE STATEMENT CANCELING A PRIMARY CANDIDATE EVENT DUE TO EMPTY CHAIR POLICY NOT BEING MET

Statement to be read when only one of the invited candidates is present at the Forum or when none of the candidates is present.

The League of Women Voters of _____ regrets that we are unable to hold our Candidates' Forum for candidates running in the **June 25 Democratic/Republican Primary for _____ office.** In accordance with our Empty Chair Policy, the League of Women Voters cannot hold a Candidates' Forum when there is only one candidate present.

_____, _____, and _____ all confirmed their intention to participate in tonight's Forum. At this time, _____ and _____ are no-shows [or only one candidate is present] so in accordance with League rules we must cancel the Forum [this segment of the Forum].

The League of Women Voters of _____ is deeply disappointed that residents of _____ will not be able to hear from all the candidates in the Democratic/Republican Primary for _____ office. A Candidates' Forum is a unique opportunity for voters to learn about who will be on their ballots. When candidates decide not to attend or participate, it is a lost opportunity for all voters. Declining to participate in a Candidates' Forum to discuss the issues that matter most to voters is contrary to the public interest and it is the voters who are harmed. We like to think of the Candidates' Forum as a job interview. After all, the winner of the election contest will be competing to work for all of us.

We believe it is important that all candidates participate in League of Women Voters of _____ activities intended to promote an informed and engaged electorate.

We are grateful to our moderator, _____, to _____ Community Media, and to the _____ Public Library for their help in making this evening possible.

Candidate _____ is present this evening. Mr/Ms _____ please identify yourself. You are welcome to remain and talk to the audience after the conclusion of this forum.

U: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE CANCELING A CANDIDATE EVENT DUE TO EMPTY CHAIR POLICY NOT BEING MET

For Immediate Release

Date _____

lwv.org (email address)

xxxxx@gmail.com

Contact: _____

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

NEWS RELEASE

Candidates Forum for NYS AD __ Election Canceled by League of Women Voters of _____

The League of Women Voters of _____ has canceled the Candidates Forum for contestants in the New York State Assembly District __ election originally scheduled for Tuesday, October 23rd. _____ accepted the League’s invitation to participate in the Forum. The other candidate, _____ did not respond to invitations to participate by the League’s deadline.

“The Candidates Forums are a key element of the League’s mission to promote an informed and engaged electorate. They are opportunities for voters to learn about who will be on their ballots. When a candidate decides not to participate it is a lost opportunity for all voters” said _____, President of the League of Women Voters of _____. “A candidate declining an invitation to discuss the issues that matter most to voters is contrary to the public interest and it is the voters who are harmed.”

The League of Women Voters takes no position on candidates for public office or on political parties. The League works to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

VOTER SERVICE METRICS REPORT Candidate Events

ELECTION (PRIMARY OR GENERAL) /DATE

NAME OF LEAGUE

NAME OF PERSON REPORTING

LEAGUE TITLE/ROLE

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

VOTER SERVICE GOALS	ACTIONS	RESULTS
1.		
2.		
3.		

CANDIDATE EVENTS (League sponsored or co-sponsored; in person or virtual)	NUMBER OF EVENTS
Candidate Forums In-Person	
Candidate Forums Virtual	
Candidate Forums In-Person AND Virtual	
League co-sponsored candidate forums (in-person or virtual)	
Meet and Greets	
Other (provide details)	
TOTAL	

VOLUNTEERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES (Members and Non-Members)	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS	NUMBER OF HOURS
Training Workshops/Webinars/Planning Meetings		
Candidate Forums		
Other (provide details)		
TOTAL		

TARGETED COMMUNITIES FOR CANDIDATE EVENTS: communities with low voter registration or turn out rates	YES/NO
Senior Communities	
Disabled People Communities/Organizations	
Communities of Color/Ethnicities	
Communities with Lower Incomes	
University/4-year College Students	
Community College/Technical/Vocational School Students	
Coalition Organizations/Partners (provide organizations' names)	
Other (provide details)	

SPECIAL FEATURES INCLUDED IN EVENTS	PRINT	DIGITAL
Other Languages besides English:		
Features for Disabled People: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille and/or Large Font for printed materials • Closed Caption for Hearing Impaired • Sign Language Translation for Hearing Impaired • Event Accessibility for Disabled People • Other (provide details) 		
Other (provide details)		

MEDIA COVERAGE OBTAINED BY YOUR LEAGUE FOR CANDIDATE EVENT	DETAILS OF COVERAGE	HOW MANY

Newspaper Coverage		
Television Coverage		
Radio Coverage		
Social Media Coverage		
Social Media Followers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • Instagram • Twitter • Other 		
Website		
Engagement with Local Reporters		
Other (provide details)		

OTHER NOTES

REPORT DATE _____