



League of Women Voters of Sacramento County - LWVSC Candidate and Issue Forum Guidelines and Policies

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. We do not support or oppose any political party or any candidate.

The goal of the League of Women Voters of California is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide.

Introduction

These policies and guidelines are intended to assist the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County (LWVSC or League), as well as prospective forum co-sponsors and the general public. The policies and guidelines contained here summarize, but may not necessarily duplicate, all of the information contained in other materials prepared by the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County, League of Women Voters of California and League of Women Voters of the United States.

Please refer to the LWVSC Voter Services Co-sponsor Agreement document for more information.

General

The League of Women Voters conducts non-partisan candidate and issues forums as part of its Voter Services outreach and education efforts. These forums are an essential part of LWVSC's mission to educate the public and encourage voter participation. The public is always invited to attend.

In almost every case, LWVSC requires two months to coordinate and prepare for a forum. Co-sponsors should submit their written application as early as possible to allow time for the League to evaluate the request, meet with sponsor(s), make arrangements, and identify qualified League volunteers to staff the forum. The League provides an application form and other documents for this purpose.

Format

Candidate debates are governed by state and federal election law. LWVSC forums are conducted formally with opening statements, questions and answers, and closing statements. Time may be allocated for rebuttals. All responses are carefully timed to ensure fairness to all participants.

Questions may be generated by the audience and submitted in writing on blank cards provided by LWVSC before and during the event. Other sources of questions may be used if consistent with the format and objectives of LWVSC.

For each forum, LWVSC provides a professionally trained volunteer staff including:

- Project manager and coordinator, usually the Voter Services Director, who is responsible for internal and external forum communication and decision-making, general oversight and event arrangements
- Forum moderator, who is responsible for ensuring order and fairness, managing questions/answers, etc.
- Question sorters, responsible for organizing questions received from the audience
- Event timers

Depending on the size and nature of the event, additional volunteers from the League may be provided. LWVSC also supplies voter registration information and registration cards, and may provide League published, non-partisan voter information materials.

Forum Co-sponsors

The League usually co-sponsors candidate and issue forums in partnership with organizations such as civic groups, neighborhood or community-based groups, non-profits, clubs or membership associations, educational institutions, broadcast or print media organizations, and others. In order to extend access to the greater community, the League prefers two or more organizations arrange for co-sponsorship of the requested forum moderated by LWVSC.

Candidate Forums

Candidates may never co-sponsor a League forum. Forum co-sponsors may never endorse any candidate, or slate of candidates, prior to the forum, and shall be asked to sign an agreement to this effect.

Co-sponsoring organizations are responsible for providing a suitable venue for the forum, along with equipment such as tables, chairs, podium, etc. Co-sponsors are responsible for payment of the all necessary and direct costs of the forum. These costs may include room charges, sound system charges, rentals, etc.

For candidate forums, co-sponsoring organizations shall invite every candidate who is qualified to run for office. Qualification is defined as:

- 1) shown on the California Secretary of State's website
- 2) qualified on the final Candidate Proof List in Sacramento County
- 3) qualified to run on an organization's official ballot.

Co-sponsors shall not distribute forum promotional or informational materials prior to approval of such materials by LWVSC. Co-sponsors are responsible for drafting and mailing invitations to all candidates; invitation documents are also subject to League review and approval.

No campaign materials of any kind are allowed in the room where the forum is held, but may be distributed outside the forum room.

Issue Forums

Issue forums are requested by co-sponsors in the same manner as Candidate forums. Co-sponsors, in conjunction with the Voter Services Director, will prepare invitations to representatives of each side of the issue. An equal number of representatives of each side of the issue will be invited to the forum to achieve balance and fairness.

Prior to the “pro and con” discussion of the forum, an introduction will be given by a League volunteer or an unbiased third party acceptable to the Voter Services Director. The introduction will include a brief history of the issue and background to broaden understanding by the audience.

Publicity Before and After Forums

The public is always invited to attend League co-sponsored and moderated events. League encourages co-sponsors to advertise the events widely.

The League always reviews and approves promotional or informational materials for forum publicity, including that which will be distributed or circulated by co-sponsors. This includes electronic transmittals. All written materials must be approved by the League prior to their release.

No videotaping, publication or distribution of any audio or video recordings of League forums is permitted without the express written permission of LWVSC; all permitted recordings must be aired or broadcast in total and may not be abridged or abbreviated. Co-sponsors will provide the League with access to audio or video recordings, including the final broadcast location/site of any videotaped and/or audio recordings. This information shall be provided as soon as possible after the forum.

Availability

Each request to LWVSC will be considered based on information provided by sponsoring organizations, scheduling, time and volunteer personnel available. While LWVSC attempts to meet all voter service requests, the Voter Services Director has discretion to decline a proposed forum, if infeasible for any reason.

LWVSC is a non-profit 501(c)(4) organization with a non-profit 501(c)(3) Education Fund. The Education Fund can accept a tax-deductible individual and/or group donation. Checks should be made payable to: LWVSC Educational Fund.

For information, please email Cheryll Moore, Voter Services Director, at votersservice@lwvsacramento.org or call the Sacramento office at (916) 447-VOTE (8683).

For additional information about the League of Women Voters, please visit:

www.lwvsacramento.org www.lwv.ca.org www.lwv.org

Thank you for your interest in the [League of Women Voters of Sacramento County](http://www.lwvsacramento.org).