

# ***The Road to the Voting Booth***

## **Part II**

### **A Handbook for Candidates Meetings**

**Copyright© 2006**

*Published as a Voter Service by*



**League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation  
62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207  
Tel: 518-465-4162, Fax: 518-465-0812  
[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)**

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **A HANDBOOK FOR CANDIDATES MEETINGS**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Why Candidate Meetings?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>When Does The League Hold Candidate Meetings?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Guidelines For Conducting Community Elections</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Guidelines For Conducting Judicial Meetings</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>What Are The Responsibilities Of The League Board?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Policy For Candidate Participation In Forums/Debates</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>“Significant Candidate” Criteria</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Policy For Empty Chair Debates</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Policy for Video Taping of Debates</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Debate Co-Sponsorship Guidelines</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Sample Co-Sponsorship Agreement</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>What Are the Responsibilities Of The Committee?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Formats, Settings, Questions</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Guidelines for Questions for Candidate Meetings</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Debate Ground Rules</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Sample Calendar For Planning A Candidates Meeting</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Sample Biographical Data Request</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Guidelines For Publishing Voters Guides</b>	<b>27</b>

<b>Sample Evaluation Form</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>What Is The Role Of The Moderator?</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Sample Format For A Formal Debate</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Sample Panel Format</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Sample Grid For Answering Questions</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>What If...</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Fair Campaign Pledge</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>39</b>



# ON THE ROAD TO THE VOTING BOOTH

## 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 handbook is designed to help League Boards and Voter Service Directors plan and conduct effective, fair and interesting candidate debates. 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.

Voter Service activities must always protect the nonpartisanship of the League. Candidates and political parties are never supported or opposed. Voter Service issue 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 reputation.

**HAVE A GREAT DEBATE!**

## WHY CANDIDATE MEETINGS?

Candidate meetings have been around almost as long as the League of Women Voters. In 1924, a small booklet published by LWVUS, suggested that we:

“hold pre-election meetings and invite all candidates to speak;

collect and give out nonpartisan information on candidates and issues;

conduct candidate meetings as a service to the voters because it gives them a means of forming a first-hand judgment of the candidates, and as a service to the candidates because it gives them an opportunity to present their views to audiences of varied political affiliation.”

The directive and the reasoning have not changed through the years. Hundreds of League candidate nights are held each year. They are considered special events in the election calendar and for very good reasons. League debates are fair; they are unbiased; they are competently run. They are conducted for informational purposes, without a hidden agenda, and are controlled by principles of nonpartisanship.

Other organizations frequently hold candidate meetings, but these meetings are not necessarily open to candidates of all parties nor conducted under strictly nonpartisan guidelines. Many Leagues offer to provide moderators and to assist in the planning of candidate meetings that are sponsored by other organizations. A fee should be requested for these services, and the League should establish the format for a fair, well-run meeting for the organization.

## **WHEN DOES THE LEAGUE HOLD A CANDIDATES MEETING?**

Leagues offer to hold candidate meetings whenever there is a contested election at its level of government:

The LWVUS is responsible for candidate meetings for national office.

The LWVNYS is responsible for candidate meetings for statewide office.

An Inter League Organization (ILO) or a group of Leagues may choose to hold a single candidate meeting 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 meetings sponsored by local Leagues, rather than a single shared meeting. Communication among Leagues and between different levels of Leagues is essential to facilitate scheduling and to avoid conflicts where sharing candidates exists.

Local leagues are responsible for candidates running for local offices.

Candidate meetings may be held:

- For federal, state, county, city, town or village general elections;
- For federal, state, county, city, town or village primary elections;
- For special elections to fill vacancies between regular elections;
- For special elections, such as fire or improvement districts;
- For community elections, such as housing authorities or tenant committees;
- For school boards;
- And, for informal meetings that may be held for judicial elections.

### **GENERAL ELECTION OR PRIMARY - WHICH CANDIDATES MEETING TO HOLD?**

If your League feels that more interest will be generated at a contested primary election than at the general election to follow, you may choose to hold a candidates meeting for the primary. It is essential that ALL candidates be willing to participate. As long as the League follows League procedures, it cannot be construed as partisan. Local Leagues may hold meetings for all contested primaries and the general elections that follow, if they have the resources.

### **SPECIAL ELECTIONS.**

Depending on the election law relating to a particular situation, special elections are held to fill vacancies between regular elections. Local Leagues are encouraged to hold candidate meetings or informal meetings in such situations.

### **SPECIAL DISTRICT ELECTIONS.**

Local leagues may hold informational meetings local issues that have an impact on all taxpayers, especially where there is a lack of understanding about such issues. This is an area where Leagues can clearly offer their services.

### **COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION ELECTIONS.**

Community organizations, such as housing authorities and health associations, may ask the League to moderate a candidates meeting prior to their election or to administer the organization's election. (See page 5 "Guidelines For Conducting Community Elections.") Leagues may consider charging a fee for these services to outside organizations.

### **SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS.**

Leagues may be asked, or may volunteer, to hold candidates meetings for school board elections. These candidates usually get less exposure than any other public candidate. By state law, school board and budget elections may be held in union free districts and central school districts on any Tuesday in May or June. In most cities, budgets are adopted by board resolution. In New York City, community school boards are chosen on the first Tuesday in May.

### **JUDICIAL CANDIDATES NIGHT.**

Many voters know very little about the court system and the judicial candidates for whom they will vote. In a contested election candidate meetings can help voters to become informed about the judicial candidates. However, special rules apply for judicial candidate meetings. (See page 7 "Guidelines for Conducting Judicial Meetings.")

### **POLICY FOR SPONSORSHIP OF STATEWIDE CANDIDATE FORUMS**

The LWVNYS reserves the right to contact the candidates for statewide office for the purpose of securing their participation in candidate forums, debates and other Voter Service activities. In certain circumstances the LWVNYS may contact candidates for a statewide office for a local League. Local Leagues are not to contact statewide candidates directly.

## **GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING COMMUNITY ELECTIONS**

Community organizations often ask local Leagues to administer elections for their Boards of Directors or for issues that need member decision. Examples of organizations that might request this service are local citizen groups, housing authorities, health groups and condo associations.

This is an area where Leagues can volunteer their services, but it is most appropriate to charge a fee. Usually the organization has a budget, which funds their election process.

### **GUIDELINES:**

1. Meet with the organization to learn the type of election to be administered and what the League's responsibilities will be. Questions you will want to ask are: Will the voting be by paper ballot or machine? If paper, who prints them? If machine, who will set it up? In either case, who makes the arrangements? How many polling places will be necessary? For what hours? How will you determine who is eligible to vote? Will there be a procedure for challenging ballots, and deferring a final vote count until challenged ballots have been verified or disqualified?
2. Review a copy of the organization's bylaws to determine the rules that govern its election process.
3. Working from the bylaws, determine the date that the election is to be held. Set up a timetable by counting back the required number of days for each phase that must be scheduled. Include the nominating process, even though it is not a League responsibility. A delay in that phase may disrupt the rest of the schedule.
4. **PUT IN WRITING** your understanding of exactly what the League is responsible for and what the organization will provide. Include in this document a statement that all literature and ballots state that the League is a nonpartisan organization supervising balloting procedures only and takes no position on issues or candidates before the voters in this particular election. Include, also, that any literature or ballot that uses the League's name must be subject to prior approval by the League. Get this statement approved and signed by the organization.
5. The League is the custodian of the ballots until the results have been certified by the League or until the League withdraws from its supervising role. Establish ahead of time to whom the ballots should be returned in the event of the latter event. When paper ballots are used, have a League member check the copy before it goes to the printer. It is disconcerting to find when the polls are ready to open that the ballots are wrong. Avoid the opportunity for fraud by having a League member pick up the ballots from the printer. If ballots are not numbered, number each one as it is given to the voter.

6. After the ballots are counted, give the unofficial results to the representative of the organization. Submit your formal statement of the vote in typed form and signed. (Certified by Jane Doe, League of Women Voters of Fair City.) In some elections, members of the organization are requested to mail ballots to a League address with a postmarked deadline for ballots to be received. Plan ahead to retain these mailed-in ballots in one pre-determined safe place until the count committee can count the ballots and notify the organization of the results.

7. In determining a fee, charge enough to pay poll workers. It is possible that you won't have enough League volunteers to staff the polls. You may also have costs for copying instructions and for training sessions. The time of the person who will organize the election, settle contract details, go to planning sessions and write the final report should be compensated for.

8. As soon as possible after the election, meet with the League members who worked on the election for review and evaluation. Write a detailed report for another year or another election.

## GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING JUDICIAL MEETINGS

The rules governing the conduct of judicial candidates are more rigid than for others running for political office. The NY Court of Appeals has held the Rules of the NY Code of Judicial conduct; the "pledges and promises" clause is constitutionally valid. The pledges and promises clause of the NY 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.

*(Rule 100.5(A)(4)(d)(i) NY Code of Judicial Conduct)*

The moderator of a judicial candidates meeting 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:

- What are your professional qualifications for election to this office?
- What are your past experiences? Have they included civil/criminal law?
- What are the problems of financing a judicial campaign?
- How would you improve the administration of the judicial system?
- What measures would you suggest to reduce court congestion and delays?
- Do you think justice would be better served with elected or appointed judges? Why?
- What is your position on the proposals to consolidate the major trial courts in New York State? Do you favor other action on court reorganization?
- What changes would you suggest to improve the jury system?
- Do you feel the current public defender system in New York State affords the indigent with competent defense? Why?
- 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:

- Do you feel Family Court is adequately funded?
- Is there sufficient support personnel?

## **WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAGUE BOARD?**

### **To make policy decisions:**

Candidate meetings are the responsibility of the entire League board. The following policies should be in place and reviewed annually:

- Policy for candidate participation in candidate forums/debates.
- Significant Candidate Criteria.
- Policy for empty-chair debates.
- Policy for video taping of candidate debates.

### **Several months before an election, the board decides:**

- Will the League hold a candidates meeting?
- Will a meeting serve League goals of informing the voter about the candidates and the issues?
- Will the meeting enhance League visibility in the community? Attract an audience?

- Will the political parties cooperate?
- Should we include all candidates for all offices on the ballot?
- What campaign literature, if any, will be allowed at the candidates meeting?
- Will we allow substitute speakers for candidates? Statements by candidates who can't appear?
- What are our criteria for canceling a meeting?

- Do we have the people power to carry it off?
- Do we want to go it alone or invite co-sponsors? (See pages 13/14 "Debate Co-Sponsorship Guidelines/ Sample Co-Sponsorship Agreement.")

### **To decide the scope of the forum:**

In most cases, all candidates seeking the same office are invited to participate, those representing the eight recognized parties as well as those independent candidates who have been certified by the Board of Elections. In some special situations, the board may consider the participation of uncertified candidates (write-ins). It is not necessary to include candidates for all offices in a forum. This is a board decision.

### **To accept co-sponsorship:**

A League may join other organizations in the community to co-sponsor candidate meetings or the League's expertise may be sought by community groups. The latter most often occurs when there are special elections - e.g. a Parent Teachers Association seeking League co-sponsorship for school board elections. Local Leagues should consider the

purpose and goals of the co-sponsor and be especially alert to questions of nonpartisanship and neutrality in relationship to candidates for non-political forums. Please review Debate Co-Sponsorship Guidelines and Sample Co-Sponsorship Agreement.

**To develop criteria:**

The adoption of criteria should be an official action of the League Board and should occur early in your debate planning. By adopting criteria early you will avoid the appearance that your criteria is influenced by knowledge of the candidates to whom the criteria will be applied. In selecting criteria the board should try to meet the following guidelines:

- \* Define the goals. Generally the goals are to educate voters and encourage voter participation in the election.
- \* Develop criteria that are nonpartisan, that can be applied objectively and that can be clearly explained to the general public.
- \* Make sure the criteria match your goals and are sufficiently detailed to enable the League to deal with the unexpected, e.g. a last minute write-in candidate or the emergence of third-party or independent candidates.
- \* Adopt your criteria by formal, official board action
- \* Have the criteria in place before any candidates have been invited to debate.
- \* Announce the criteria and goals in media releases well before candidates are invited.
- \* Once the criteria has been adopted, stick to it and apply it consistently. It is not subject to negotiations with either candidates or broadcasters.
- \* Review the criteria after each election year to determine if they are still valid or need to be revised. See sample Policy for Candidate Participation in Forums/Debates on page 10, and Policy for Empty Chair Debates and Policy for Video Taping of Debates on page 12.

The entire board is responsible for the success of the candidate meeting and supports in the planning and oversight of these meetings. It participates in constructive discussion of the recommendations of the meeting chair as they are brought to the board. The chair recommends, but the board makes the final decisions. Attendance of all board members at all candidate meetings is mandatory. Each meeting is a command performance!

## **POLICY FOR CANDIDATE PARTICIPATION IN FORUMS/DEBATES**

It is important for your board to establish and to publicize a candidate participation policy well before any candidates are invited to participate. Ideally your board will adopt a policy even before you know who the candidates will be. This means that your policy must anticipate the unexpected.

Your policy should include a statement of purpose and the criteria for candidate participation. Below is an example of an inclusive policy.

### **Policy for Participation in a Candidate Forum**

(Purpose) The League of Women Voters of \_\_\_\_\_ sponsors candidate debates to educate the voters on the issues; to stimulate voter interest; and to encourage voter participation in elections.

(Criteria) Candidates who meet all New York State election law requirements to be on the ballot and are involved in contested races are eligible to take part in candidate debates.

Citizens running as write-in candidates may participate in debates if they show evidence that a formal campaign is being waged e.g. presence of a campaign headquarters (may be out of a home); staff consisting of at least a treasurer; issuance of campaign positions; campaign appearances etc.; must show evidence of voter support e.g. having at least three volunteers working on his/her behalf and show financial support from at least six contributors.

Adopted \_\_\_\_\_(date)

(It is the candidates', not the League's, responsibility to demonstrate that all criteria has been met.)

## **“SIGNIFICANT CANDIDATE” CRITERIA**

A League may choose to use an exclusive policy (rather than an inclusive one) and develop specific criteria for a “significant candidate” (leading contender) debate as long as the criteria is objective, non-partisan and non-discriminatory. Any criteria you develop should be made known to the candidates when invitations are sent and to the general public in advance of the debate.

There are several factors that can be used to measure significance, depending on the availability of information. In general, you should choose factors that are relevant to the particular office and factors for which there is sufficient information to apply them objectively. Again clearly state to the candidates and the public those factors that will be used to measure significance and be sure to include the statement that the League will use its “good faith judgment” in applying the factors to determine significance.

Examples of criteria:

Results of major, reliable, nonpartisan public opinion polls.

Use a reasonable percentage, keeping in mind the number of candidates. (No third party candidates have polled over 7% in statewide races in New York State.) Set a cut-off date so that you will have reasonable time to make final debate plans.

Question: do you believe there will be sufficient poll data? Some Leagues who have used this criteria find poll information has not been available in a timely manner or, worse yet, not available at all!

Coverage by media as a recognized candidate.

Eligibility for public matching funds or other evidence of financial support from a significant number of contributors.

(Problems with this one--what is a “significant number?” What about the candidate who finances her/his own campaign out-of-pocket? Setting a specific dollar amount might give the impression that the League believes that the more you raise and spend, the better your chances are of becoming a significant candidate.)

## **POLICY FOR EMPTY CHAIR DEBATES**

When one or more candidates for federal office is on the ballot and only one candidate chooses to attend the LWV's forum, then no candidate for that office will be permitted to appear. **EMPTY CHAIR DEBATES MAY NOT BE HELD FOR FEDERAL CANDIDATES** (e.g. Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate.) The Federal Election Commission (FEC) requires that debates include at least two candidates. An empty chair debate with only one federal candidate is considered a contribution of "something of value."

An empty chair debate may be held for state, county or local offices if no commercial media is broadcasting the debate. Under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations, any broadcaster or cablecaster that permits a candidate for any public office to use its facilities must provide all other legally qualified candidates for the same office with equal time. Public access channels are not required to abide by this regulation.

When more than one candidate for a state, county or local office is on the ballot and an invited candidate for state, county or local office does not respond or accept an invitation to the forum, or when a candidate accepts but does not appear at the forum, the candidate present at the forum may make a statement and answer League prepared questions as long as this situation is made clear to the audience. The moderator will be permitted to announce that the absent person(s) is a candidate for that office. No substitutes will be permitted to take the place of a candidate, nor will the moderator read any statements of the absent candidates' view.

## **POLICY FOR VIDEO TAPING OF DEBATES**

Most Leagues have a policy that no video tapes of a debate can be made unless the tape will be shown unedited and in its entirety. An example of a policy statement is below:

No video taping of candidate debates, or parts thereof, is permitted except by those previously authorized by the the League of Women Voters to officially tape the event.

## 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.

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;
- treat the candidates equitably, and
- agree to issue jointly all press releases, letters and other material circulated to the public.

Signed,

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-sponsoring organization \_\_\_\_\_

## SAMPLE CO-SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT

This document signifies agreement between THE ORGANIZATION 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.

Organization will:

- Provide a written invitation to each candidate.
- Accompanying the invitation will be two copies of an acceptance form.
  - One will be retained by the candidate.
- Accompanying the invitation will be list of the ground rules.
- All mail will be sent certified, return receipt requested.
- All publicity will include the name of the organization.
- Provide paper and pencils for questions from the audience.
- Provide microphones for the moderator and candidates.
- Provide identification cards for each candidate at the table.

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 screen questions submitted by the audience.
- Provide refreshments for a social hour that will follow the forum.

---

Chairperson  
Organization

Date

---

Chairperson  
League

Date

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.

## **WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE?**

### **Role of the Chair and the Committee.**

The chair is the individual designated by the board to be responsible for all aspects of the candidate meeting. This is the one person with whom everyone will come into contact with and therefore must project a positive, nonpartisan image of the League.

The chair acts on the criteria and decisions made by the board. She/he relates to the board the decisions of the committee and requests board approval when appropriate.

The chair assembles a committee which will, under her/his leadership, create a calendar and budget, outline other areas of responsibility, assign those responsibilities to committee and/or board members and oversee the event to its successful conclusion.

### **Preliminary Planning.**

Site Selection and Facilities - the forum should be centrally located, handicap accessible, with public transportation and/or adequate public parking available. This is an area where cost may be involved - e.g. rental of an auditorium; rental of sound and audio-visual equipment; rental of chairs, tables, refreshment equipment; 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, but there is a cost of \$100 for the insurance company to issue the document acknowledging the coverage. Many Leagues find it acceptable to verbally assure the facility of the League insurance coverage without submitting the document.

Contracting for the meeting site may require signing a formal agreement with liability potential. Any such contract should be reviewed by an attorney, approved by the board and signed by the president.

### **Amenities.**

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;
- \*mono-color background, drapery or wall for TV cameras and for display of the LWV banner.

The physical arrangement of the platform will depend on the number of candidates and the format, however in all situations there should be a draped table, on a raised platform, with printed name cards readable by audiences and TV viewers; lighting suitable for TV production; microphones for each speaker and floor mikes for audience participation (These must be checked just before the meeting to assure their adequacy for TV and auditorium needs. Decide if ushers are needed to control floor mikes during the question period); adequate accommodations on the platform to assure eye-contact between candidates, moderator and timekeepers; supplies for participants: adequate water pitchers, glasses, pads, pencils; for timekeepers: stopwatches, time cards and reserved front row seats.

### **Arrangements: Date/Time.**

Select potential meeting dates close enough to the election to generate interest but with enough lead time to allow multiple reruns of the meeting on cable TV.

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 meeting, the committee should devise a time-line 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 meeting dates with other Leagues sharing the candidates, discuss co-sponsorship, planning and division of responsibilities.

Consider refreshments for before or after the forum.

Prepare a display of League publications and membership information.

### **Planning The Meeting.**

Select a moderator.

Establish appropriate format, ground rules and policy for displaying campaign literature. (see pages 19 -23)

Formulate questions to ask the candidates and bring those questions to the board for approval.

Contact the candidates. 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 does not always contain many details. 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.  
(see page 25, Biographical Data Request.)

### **Media Involvement.**

The board's Publicity chair may be asked to join the committee and assume responsibility for print, radio and TV coverage, or the responsibilities may be divided among committee members. Be sure specific responsibilities are clearly understood.

Where required, contracts with radio and TV stations should be reviewed by an attorney, approved by the board and signed by the president.

League policy requires that candidate meetings be rebroadcast in their entirety. In order to assure prime-time scheduling on the cable TV or radio networks, rather than leaving the timing to the discretion of the station, it is important to negotiate early in the planning for network time.

It is important to invite news reporters to candidate meetings and to determine their deadlines. Candidate meetings with more than one segment might be arranged so that the segment with the greatest public interest be scheduled before the reporter must leave to meet the filing deadline.

### **Candidate Meeting.**

The president represents the League and may open the meeting. 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 audience.

The moderator is in charge of the meeting once she/he is introduced.

### **Post meeting.**

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 meeting.

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.

\*See the pages 25, 26, 27 and 28 for a Sample Calendar For Planning A Candidates Meeting, Sample Biographical Data Request, Guidelines For Publishing Voters Guides and Sample Evaluation Form.

## FORMATS, SETTINGS, QUESTIONS

A critical factor to the success of any meeting is the format that is chosen by the Voter Service Committee. 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. A good format can make the difference between an informative, interesting debate and one that is dull and obscures the candidates' differences on the issues. The format may also determine whether a debate truly offers equal opportunities for the candidates to present their positions. A faulty debate may favor one candidate over others or make all candidates appear weak. With any format, statements and responses to questions should alternate among candidates; questions from the audience should avoid duplications; each question should be answered by each candidate who wishes to speak. Above all, issues, not personalities, should be addressed.

Formats are more likely to be subject to tough questions than other debate issues. Candidates seek forums that will play up their strengths and present no surprises or risks. Broadcasters want formats that promise good television - lively, contentious and unpredictable. Some critics will condemn any departure from the "classic debate" or the panel/question/answer-rebuttal formula; others fault debate formats as too dull or formal.

Since TV coverage of candidates meetings has become almost universal, audiences look for a livelier presentation and a more responsive format than the formal structure used in the past.

### **DEBATE FORMATS:**

**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 mike 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 phoned in by the at-home listeners/viewers. 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. Candidates are told how much cumulative time they have for the question period at the beginning of the debate by the moderator and are timed by their own timekeeper. Each candidate is aware of how much time s/he has used during the course of 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 can not “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.

**CROSS QUESTIONING:** In this format the candidates ask each other questions and the moderator acts as a referee, enforcing rules and keeping the debate on track. This format works best as one segment of a mixed format debate. Since the candidates control the agenda, they can avoid bringing up issues of substance and allow the debate to focus on personalities. On the other hand, this format allows the audience to evaluate the candidates by the questions they ask as well as their answers. The questions and answers should be subject to time limits.

**MEET THE CANDIDATES NIGHT:** This format involves inviting all candidates to make a statement about their backgrounds, qualifications, positions etc. Each is allotted a specific time to make the presentation. No questions are asked and no interchange among the candidates takes place.

**CANDIDATE FAIRS:** When there are too many candidates to hold a debate, a fair might be used. Candidates have a table or booth in a central location such as a gymnasium, shopping mall or city park where they can display and distribute campaign literature. The audience circulates; the candidates do not.

**SHARED QUESTIONS:** Another solution when there are too many candidates to hold a conventional debate is to seat the candidates in the order in which they will appear on the ballot and ask for a response to the first question, asked by the moderator, from the first three candidates; a response to the next question by the next three candidates etc. The first responder to each question changes to avoid having the same candidate answering first. This also serves to change the composition of the groups. Responses are timed but candidates may respond to earlier questions if they have time left and can also respond to earlier questions in their closing statements. The moderator will need to use a grid to keep track of the order for responses. Opening statements are usually omitted in this format.

**DEBATE SETTINGS:**

There are a variety of settings other than the traditional auditorium or studio that might be considered if the candidates, political parties and the League are willing to experiment and break with tradition.

**OUTDOOR RALLIES:** Weather permitting, a debate can be an exciting centerpiece to an outdoor community event, such as a primary debate heading a 4th of July band concert and fireworks display at a community park. Coordination, cooperation and co-sponsorship are important to the success of such an event but the exhilaration it can generate and the favorable publicity for the League are well worth the additional effort.

**BREAKFAST, LUNCH OR DINNER FORUMS:** People are often willing to attend a sit-down meal attached to a candidate meeting. Breakfast and luncheon affairs are usually geared for those who are employed and are on budgeted time schedules; therefore the maximum time involved is usually limited to 1 1/2 hours, equally divided between eating and listening to the candidates. Dinners may run as long as 3 hours. In either situation, cooperation of the caterer or restaurant is necessary to assure that the meal begins on time, and the moderator must start and conclude the meeting on schedule.

**SHOPPING CENTER FORUMS:** With more and more shopping centers enclosed and climate-controlled, they have become community gathering places. Some shopping center managers are willing to provide microphones and other essentials to make an informal candidate meeting possible.

## **GUIDELINES FOR QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATE MEETINGS**

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

1. Questions must be clear, concise and appropriate to the office being sought by the candidates.
2. 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.
3. Questions should reflect the issues of greatest interest to the entire community and cover a broad range of topics.
4. Word questions so that they can not be answered by “yes” or “no.”
5. Word questions in a manner that will elicit the political philosophy of each candidate.
6. Questions must not include or imply personal attacks on any candidate.

League program directors may be requested to help formulate questions.

## DEBATE GROUND RULES

Ground rules establish the limits of the meeting 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.

Ground rules address such questions as:

Should the president of the LWV (or of a co-sponsoring organization) or the Voter Service Chair open the meeting?

Will League announcements be made before the meeting begins?

Will there be opening statements by the candidates or will the forum begin with a prepared question?

Will questions from the floor be made from floor mikes? 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?

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? This can be a time consuming, disruptive process and, therefore not recommended for meetings being simulcast on TV.

Will questions be received by 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. The studio's technical crew may be accustomed to the phone-in programming and may have developed workable procedures. Under any circumstances, there should be a mechanism for screening calls rather than putting them directly on the air. This procedure necessitates planning and co-ordination between the moderator and the TV personnel.

Should all candidates be allowed to answer all questions, even when they are directed to one specific candidate?

How long should the meeting 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.

Audiences and the candidates are frequently disappointed by time limitations and request extended time, especially when there are many “hot issues.”

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.

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. It may also be possible to extend the length of the meeting if the candidates, TV, custodians on site and the audience agree, but this contingency should be worked out ahead of time.

May campaign literature, buttons, stickers be displayed or distributed within the meeting space? League policy on this should be clearly spelled out and information given ahead of time to the candidates, party workers and League members who will assist at the forum. If the meeting is out-of-door or in a shopping mall, the answer might not be as simply resolved as if the meeting were held in an enclosed hall.

## **SAMPLE CALENDAR FOR PLANNING A CANDIDATES MEETING**

<b>June</b>	Board decision to hold a forum; basic policies made on recommendation of Voter Service Committee.
<b>Summer</b>	Meeting of the Voter Service Committee to establish a tentative calendar. Create the necessary committees, assign responsibilities. Research availability of meeting dates, sites, TV, cable, radio. Invite all potential candidates after they have filed with the Board of Elections. Discuss formats and ground rules. Obtain the moderator and work with the moderator in planning the format. Decide on a site and reserve potential dates.
<b>September</b>	Bring committee recommendations to the first board meeting for confirmation. Board decision on LWV publication display and policy on candidates' literature. Correspond with candidates re: place, time, format, ground rules and campaign literature. Decide on need for a printed program/Voters Guide, refreshments.
<b>Early October</b>	Inform board of committee progress, request assistance with questions for candidates. First press release by Public Relations Chair. Deadline to receive biographical information from candidates for program or Voters Guide.
<b>Mid October</b>	If there is to be a program or Voters Guide, prepare the copy and deliver to printer. Continue to work out details. Public Relations Chair continues to issue press releases.
<b>Late October</b>	Provide final format to moderator and timekeepers. Completion of all committee business. Final check with candidates, moderator, timekeepers, co- sponsors. Candidates Meeting: Set up platform, podium, name signs, banners, refreshment area, parking signs, direction signs inside the facility. Check lighting, sound system with technicians before the meeting. Final check with committee members and others assigned tasks.
<b>November</b>	Evaluation



## **GUIDELINES FOR PUBLISHING VOTERS GUIDES**

Because it is essential that all candidates be treated alike, the following guidelines should be used when publishing Voters Guides:

The local Board of Elections is the most reliable source of information on local ballot proposals and candidates. Local Leagues should secure preliminary information from the Board of Elections, follow local newspapers and check with political parties.

All candidates appearing on the ballot must be included in a Voters Guide. If, after several attempts to secure information from a candidate, it is not forthcoming, the League will include the candidates name, party and the office the candidate is seeking. Depending upon the situation, the local league will print a sample disclaimer for candidates who do not respond: i.e., “This candidate did not respond to the League’s inquiry, ” or “This candidate chose not to respond.”

If sample ballots are to be used in a Voters Guide, the ballot must match the ballot face that will appear on the voting machine on Election Day. Your Board of Elections may be of assistance in providing an acceptable sample ballot if the actual ballot is not available by the Voters Guide deadline (and it almost never is).

Following these guidelines helps to assure the public of the League’s nonpartisan-ship and helps to reinforce the League’s sense of fairness and its credibility in the local community.

## SAMPLE EVALUATION FORM

**To: Voter Service Chair(s), League President(s), League Board Members.**  
**Please complete this form and return to the Voter Service Chair.**

**Meeting for candidates for (offices):** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Number of participants** \_\_\_\_\_ **Size of audience** \_\_\_\_\_

**Site:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Was the site adequate in size?** \_\_\_\_\_ **Adequate parking facilities?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Handicapped accessible?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stage facilities?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Was the meeting co-sponsored?** \_\_\_\_\_ **With whom?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What role(s) did the co-sponsor take?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What role(s) did the local League take?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Was this satisfactory?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Did you have TV/radio coverage?** \_\_\_\_\_ **pre-meeting ads?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of pre-election reruns?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Did you have newspaper publicity before?** \_\_\_\_\_ **After?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Planning:**

**Did the board discuss the meeting plan?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Did the board contribute questions for the candidates?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Did the Voter Service Chair/Committee have full responsibility?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Was there an ad hoc committee appointed to run the meeting?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Did the board fully support the meeting?** \_\_\_\_\_

## **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MODERATOR?**

Once a forum 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 s/he represents the nonpartisan standards of the League, it is important that the moderator be absolutely independent of the local political situation. Therefore a moderator should be from outside of the immediate community and election district(s) relevant to the forum.

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

### **Assistance from the Committee.**

The moderator should expect certain information prior to the forum:

Details about the arrangements: the date, hour, duration of the meeting, TV coverage, exact location of the meeting, driving directions and parking availability.

Information about the candidates, their biographies and local newspaper publicity.

Information about the expected audience, the size, usual behavior, an accurate appraisal of the temper of the race, "hot issues" and community factions.

Copies of League publicity, flyers, invitation letters. The moderator should request these items when moderating for organizations other than the League.

The moderator should be involved in discussions of the format and given the opportunity to make cogent suggestions.

### **Preparation for the Candidate Night.**

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

**PREPARE A SCRIPT** to free the moderator from stress at the meeting. 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 stake holder in the election and introduce the moderator and timekeeper(s).

Introduction of the candidates.

Explanation of the meeting's format and ground rules.

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 meeting, including a reminder of the date, time and place(s) of the election. The time and date of TV re-runs can also be announced.

**REHEARSE THE SCRIPT** so it comes naturally, with words you would normally use. It can become so familiar that you 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 shown in Appendix --- and also 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 COLORED CARDS** to be given out at the door. This prevents any faction from coming to the forum with questions already formulated. If the format calls for questions at the mike, the moderator should recommend that the committee have members prepared to ask questions if the audience participation is slow in getting started.

Should problem situations arise during the question period, a moderator may be able to show control if s/he is prepared to make an appropriate response. See "What If..." in Appendix --- for suggested responses.

**Before the meeting begins:**

Visit the site so you will know the best way to get there in the dark.

Arrive early, with all your papers in order. Prepare lots for the candidates to draw to determine the order for answering questions and for opening and closing statements.

Have your agenda, seating chart, pen and the gavel from your local League or sponsoring organization.

Check the mike(s), 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 you, the TV cameras and the audience.

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.

Prior to the meeting, call the candidates together to draw lots, go over the ground rules and ask for proper pronunciation of names.

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 meeting starts. (If this is a "meet the candidates forum" and not a debate, there should be no rebuttals.)

If questions from the audience will be written, be sure that a League member screens them to check that the handwriting is legible, the question is acceptable and not personal or slanderous, and to group questions in categories to avoid repetition. The audience should be advised that similar questions may be combined by the moderator.

If the audience is asked to come to the floor microphone, have a League member in charge of the mike.

If TV coverage is provided, the camera crew can be your best friends; cultivate them. Ask if they have to change tapes at some point in the meeting and how they will inform you. Announce the process to the audience before the meeting begins.

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

Some words of wisdom: It may be helpful to bear in mind that:

A candidate forum is a human institution and as such is imperfect. Who is better suited to do the job properly than the League of Women Voters? And how can the League do it without hardy souls like you?

Careful preparation is the best insurance against the unexpected (and there usually is something you didn't quite expect).

A sense of humor is often your best weapon in dealing with the swirling political passions of the moment.

Above all, be gracious and pleasant no matter what you personally think about the candidates. You will earn the respect of all if they perceive that you are FAIR AND FIRM.

Candidate meetings should be fun! They should serve the public, providing as much information as the candidates will give, in as nonpartisan environment as the League can create.

## **SAMPLE FORMAT FOR A FORMAL DEBATE**

**7:30** Welcome, opening remarks, introduction of the moderator by the president or chair.

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

1. Each candidate will make a three minute opening statement; order was 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 have been made, 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.

1. Questioners will be asked to stand (or go to the mike), state their name and address, and indicate to whom the question is addressed. 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.

5. Candidates will be limited to answers not exceeding two minutes.

**7:55** Questions from the audience.

**8:30** Closing statements; each candidate may have a two minute closing statement.

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

\*This format can be used for the Cumulative Time Forum by eliminating opening statements and allowing candidates to apportion their time after all candidates have answered a question for further comments or rebuttals. Closing statements should be retained.

## **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 minute response; each candidate will have the opportunity to respond and the order of responses will be rotated for each question, or

A different question will be asked of each candidate, with a two minute response time; remaining candidates will be given a one minute response time if they wish.

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 each who wishes would have a chance to respond.

## SAMPLE GRID FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Candidate #1	Candidate #2	Candidate #3	Candidate #4
1	2	3	4
2	3	4	1
3	4	1	2
4	1	2	3
1	2	3	4

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 THIS.

## 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?**

Remind the audience that this is not a rally for voters who have already made up their minds, but a nonpartisan meeting 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 meeting.

### **...there is a challenge to your authority and the way you are conducting the meeting?**

Calmly restate the ground rules and proceed. (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.

**...the audience is very small?**

Consider rearranging the chairs in a more informal setting and perhaps adopting a more conversational format. Give the candidates more time to answer questions.

**...you run out of questions?**

Adjourn. Sometimes the audience is small or the race lacks hot issues. Just move ahead to the closing statements and send the grateful audience home to bed.

**...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 meeting 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 meeting.

Reprinted with the permission of Marin County, California League of Women Voters

# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

## FAIR CAMPAIGN PLEDGE

As a candidate for public office in the upcoming November election I pledge the following:

I will conduct my campaign honestly, openly, and fairly. I will discuss the issues and participate in fair public debate with respect to my views and qualifications.

I will not engage in, permit, or condone defamatory attacks upon the character of my opponent(s); nor will I engage in invasions of personal privacy unrelated to campaign issues.

I will not use or permit the use of any campaign material or advertisement which misrepresents, distorts, or otherwise falsifies facts regarding my opponent(s),

I will refuse to disseminate any campaign material or message in which the candidate is not prominently identified.

I will publicly repudiate support from any individual or group whose activities would violate this Fair Campaign Pledge.

In signing this pledge, I assume personal control over and responsibility for the conduct of my campaign.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return signed pledge to:

## RESOURCES

### PUBLICATIONS:

LWVUS:

**Face to Face: A Guide to Candidate Debates**

LWVEF Pub. # 830

\$10.00 (\$8.00 for members)

**Pick a Candidate**

Pub.1044

\$.35 (\$.25 for members)

Citizen's tool for evaluating candidates, identifying personal issues and priorities and spotting misleading campaign tactics.

**Seleccione a Un Candidato**

Pub. 1004

\$.35 (\$.25 for members)

Spanish version of Pick a Candidate

LWVNYS:

**Facts for Voters**

Election deadlines, Ballot proposals, candidate information

**Road To The Voting Booth, Part II, A Handbook for Candidate Meetings**

\*NEW \$6.00 (\$5.00 for members)

### WEB SITES:

**[www.lwvus.org](http://www.lwvus.org)**

National League of Women Voters

**[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)**

New York State League of Women Voters

**[www.dnet.org](http://www.dnet.org)**

**DemocracyNet**

Compare national, state and local candidates' stands on the issues; ask candidates questions; learn more about the candidates.

**[www.election.state.ny.us](http://www.election.state.ny.us)**

NYS Election Law, political calendar etc.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“The Road to the Voting Booth: A Handbook for Candidates Forums,” first issued in 1985, is a manual developed by the League of Women Voters of New York State to assist local Leagues in planning and conducting candidate meetings.

Special thanks are extended to Paula Blum, Betsy Brody, Kay Stuligross, Mary Lou Urban, Karen McBride and Rob Marchiony who provided invaluable assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

Peg Hathaway, Vice President

Voter Service/Citizen Education

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan volunteer organization working to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. It does support or oppose legislation after serious study and substantial agreement among its members. This publication is published by the Foundation for Citizen Education, League of Women Voters of New York State.