

League of Women Voters of Coos County

Voter Forum Policies

Definitions

1. A League of Women Voters of Coos County (LWVCC) candidate forum includes at least two candidates for the same elected position, is staged in a way that does not promote or advance one candidate or another, and allows the candidates to appear concurrently, in face-to-face confrontations with the opportunity to respond to each other or to written and screened questions from the audience with strict time limitations. To be included in a forum, a candidate must be legally filed for the position with the state or county election office. All legally filed major party candidates for the position are invited. No substitute or stand-in is allowed.
2. A LWVCC issues forum usually presents the opposing sides of the scheduled issue with equal time to present their side of the issue and answer written and screened questions from the audience. The League will have sufficient control over such important factors as presenters of the issue and choice of moderator, staffing, content, and format to ensure that League standards for fairness and non-partisanship are met. No current candidates running for an elected office, or intending to file, may be a presenter or moderator for such a forum.
3. A League advocacy forum may also advocate for an issue, such as pro or con for a Ballot Measure. When a League forum is advocating pro or con for an issue or only discussing specific sides of the issue involved, the publicity for this event must clearly state this.

League Standards

4. The League will not be publicly identified with a forum without sufficient control over important factors such as criteria for candidate participation, content, and format to ensure that League standards for fairness and non-partisanship are met. The League will not co-sponsor a forum with an organization that has a vested interest in the outcome or that will compromise the League's standards for non-partisanship.
5. Participating candidates and presenters will receive copies of the Voter Forum Policies and Ground Rules with their invitation to participate in the forum. The candidate/presenter him (or her)self must return a signed copy of the Acceptance and Agreement with the Confirmation of their compliance and participation in order to be included in the form.

Public Access

6. The public will have access to attend the forums. Complete unedited coverage may also be broadcast to the public through the media and/or on the Internet.

Candidate Forums

7. Forums require at least two opposing candidates. It is the League's responsibility to prevent a forum from turning into a solo candidate appearance that has the look, feel and content of a campaign rally for the only remaining candidate as well as assuring that all regulations are followed and the League's nonpartisan reputation is upheld.

8. In the event that one or more candidates for the same position decline or cancel, the forum will be held as long as two opposing candidates will attend. The forum will be canceled or rescheduled if only one candidate for that position agrees to attend.
9. If at least two candidates for the position are present, and another candidate cancels or fails to show up, the moderator will announce that a candidate has canceled his/her participation in the forum and will present any factual reasons given by the candidate without editorial comment. For example, the League might simply state that it was contacted by the candidate or his/her campaign and told the candidate would not be able to appear at the forum and no reasons were given for canceling his/her participation.
10. If the forum must be canceled because only one candidate is present, and the candidate who canceled provides a statement, the League's Forum Chairperson may ask the moderator to read statements on behalf of both candidates. Attempts can be made to reschedule the forum.
11. Issue/Ballot Measure forums will present both sides equally by a proponent and opponent. When the forum is an informational and educational presentation of one side of the issue, the publicity will clearly state that purpose.

Recording and Broadcast Rules

12. Political debates/forums broadcast on radio or TV are subject to Federal Communications (FCC) rules that differ under different conditions. League sponsored forums must conform to the rules that apply to the relevant broadcast.
13. All candidates must be advised of the League's recording policy in the letter of invitation. FCC requires that a forum must not be edited and must be broadcast in its entirety, either live or reasonably soon after it takes place. If a public access broadcaster films the forum, they own the recording. The League is not obligated to give a recorded copy of the forum to anyone.

Staffing at the forum

14. The League will have sufficient control over such important factors as presenters of the issue and choice of moderator, staffing, content, and format to ensure that League standards for fairness and non-partisanship are met.

Campaign Activities and materials

15. No campaigning or campaign materials are allowed in the forum auditorium. Tables will be available in the lobby for campaign materials.