



engage

Many people find the most valuable political experiences to be those that allow them to have direct interaction with the candidates. Debates, forums, fairs, rallies, and campaign presentations are all great ways for you to connect the issues you care about to voting and engage candidates in the political process.



ATTEND A POLITICAL EVENT

You will get the chance to hear directly from the candidate and it is quite common for candidates to talk to the audience after an event.



SUBMIT QUESTIONS

Not every debate will take questions from audience members and some may call for submissions in the days before the debate, others during the event itself. Regardless of the format, submitting questions and topic ideas is a great way to get candidates to focus on your issue.



VOLUNTEER

Events can be hosted by the campaigns themselves, by college campus organizations or community groups. Check out the candidate's website to see if there are events going on in your community.



HOST

Hosting a debate or forum is a substantial way of engaging your peers while challenging candidates to address the issues important to young people. With any of these events, after deciding what type of event you would like to have, your next step is to get in touch with the candidate by contacting their campaign headquarters. Usually the person you'll want to speak with is the scheduler. Let them know who you are, group affiliation, and your event idea. Be clear that you don't want to make more work for the campaign but that your event could be a great opportunity for the candidate to meet and hear from potential voters. Be

prepared to put something in writing to the campaign's office and to be flexible with your dates and times so that you can accommodate the candidate's hectic schedule. Once you have received confirmation from the candidate(s), you can begin to plan the logistical details of your event!

Different Types of Events

A few ideas about the major types of events are below, but remember that there is no “right way” to proceed in organizing a candidate event. It is important for you to consider how much time and resources you have available and are willing to commit to your efforts. Some projects and events may require considerably more effort than others.

Candidate/Political Fairs: These are a great way for people to learn about candidates, where candidate stand on different issues, and what they hope to accomplish in office. Invite candidates, political parties, groups supporting or opposing ballot measures, groups concerned about particular issues, and other interested parties to set up tables, distribute information, and meet people. If the candidates show up, it will give people a unique opportunity to talk with them in an informal atmosphere.

Forums: Invite candidates to participate in a forum. Give each candidate a set amount of time (usually 3-5 minutes) to share their position and ideas on a particular issue. Following the candidates' allotted time, take questions from the audience regarding the same issue. This format can incorporate as many or as few issues as you want, depending on how the amount of time provided for statements and questions and the duration of the whole event.

Debates: Debates are much like forums, just with a different format. Typically questions are asked and candidates have a set amount of time to respond to the questions and then another set amount of time for follow-up or to respond directly to another candidate. There are several different debate formats, including the town hall meeting (when members of the audience ask the questions), the panel approach (when the debate participants answer questions from a small number of people), and the single moderator (when one person asks the questions.)

Service Stops: Plan a service-learning project to draw attention to a community need and engage your peers and the candidates in service addressing that need. This is a great opportunity to educate your candidates about the importance of community service! Try to select projects that will be of interest to the candidate you're inviting.

Meet & Greets and Rallies: These are two types of events that are usually organized by political campaigns. Either event will involve a candidate speaking (usually a “stump” speech tailored to the audience) and occasionally taking questions, followed by some time mingling

and interacting with the audience. Campaigns always love when community groups offer to help them put on one of these types of events. Groups can help campaigns with these events by assisting in securing a location, setting up the event and most importantly, by inviting people to attend.



[WHIZ KID] Damon Weaver made his name in journalism with a campaign-time interview of then-Vice Presidential wannabe Joe Biden in 2008. In 2009 at the age of 11, Damon, was invited to the White House to interview President Obama on issues important to American kids, including education reform, budget cuts to education programs. At the end of the interview, Damon announced "President Obama is now my homeboy too."

RESOURCES

Mobilize: www.mobilize.org

Rock the Vote: www.rockthevote.com

Vote 411: www.vote411.org

Declare Yourself: www.declareyourself.com

Project Vote Smart: www.votesmart.org

Youth Policy Action Center/ Spark Action: <http://sparkaction.org>