

## DEBATES

(From LWVMD *Policies and Procedures* 2016)

I. The LWVMDEF is responsible for organizing debates for any of the statewide offices; namely, Governor, Lt. Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General and U.S. Senators.

II. Prior to the primary and/or general elections, it is the role of the LWVMD/LWVMDEF to initiate and manage League-sponsored debates for any of the statewide races. Debates affecting those offices should not be sponsored by LIs without LWVMD Board approval. LIs may hold forums for the U.S. House of Representatives, the State Senate, the House of Delegates and local county, city or municipal offices. (Please see Nonpartisanship section.)

III. LWVMDEF may respond favorably to requests from other organizations to cosponsor additional gubernatorial and senatorial debates if they are nonpartisan and if candidates meet League standards for participation. Caution should be exercised when co-sponsoring with other organizations, especially single-issue organizations. Co-sponsored events should not conflict with any State League-managed debates called for in the previous paragraph, in timing or personnel or financial resource requirements. This same policy applies to requests for assistance, e.g., timekeeping, moderating or furnishing questions.

IV. Debates aim to serve the following purposes:

- A. Educate the public about issues.
- B. Allow face-to-face comparisons of the candidates and their positions.

V. When the League is the sole or lead sponsor:

- A. A decision on criteria for candidate participation will be made at least six months prior to the statewide primary election. If LWVMDEF decides to sponsor debate(s) for specific statewide office(s), the President will appoint a debate management committee.
- B. The committee should estimate how much the debate(s) will cost so that money can be budgeted and donations can be solicited to cover costs beyond those already in the prepared budget.
- C. The media should be informed shortly after the decision that the LWVMDEF plans to sponsor and manage one or more debate(s). Efforts should be made to obtain broadcasting coverage throughout the state.
- D. The debate(s) should occur prior to the beginning of early voting, if at all possible.

VI. To be invited to participate in a LWVMDEF debate a candidate must:

- A. Be legally qualified, if elected, to hold the office under federal and state law; AND
- B. Have filed and met all requirements to be on the ballot according to Maryland's election laws; AND
- C. Have demonstrated significant voter interest and support by
  - 1. Being nominated by a recognized political party in Maryland OR
  - 2. Having received 10 % of public support in a recognized, nonpartisan statewide public opinion poll OR
  - 3. If no such poll exists, the candidate must
    - Provide examples of campaign coverage by at least two major media sources in

different geographical areas of the state AND

- Demonstrate that a formal campaign is being conducted by the existence of campaign headquarters and staff or an active website.

D. It is the policy of the League of Women Voters of Maryland that candidate debates and forums should be inclusive of all candidates who have qualified to be on the ballot, including all candidates of state recognized political parties, independent candidates and write-in candidates. However, if the debate or candidates' forum is co-sponsored by a broadcasting station and the station is not able to provide coverage if all candidates are included, a candidate must meet the following criteria:

Be legally qualified, if elected, to hold the office under federal and state law; AND

1. Have filed and met all requirements to be on the ballot according to Maryland's election laws AND
2. Demonstrate significant voter interest and support by:
  - a. Having received 15 % of public support in a recognized, nonpartisan statewide public opinion poll OR
  - b. If no such poll exists,
    - Provide multiple examples of campaign coverage by at least two major media sources in different geographical areas of the state AND
    - Demonstrate that a formal campaign is being conducted by the existence of campaign headquarters and staff or an active website.