LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS CANDIDATE FORUMS

Job Descriptions for Event Volunteers

Master of Ceremonies: This League representative welcomes the audience, gives a brief explanation of LWV forum rules, acknowledges any co-sponsors or live media, and introduces the moderator. At the conclusion, the League emcee thanks everyone and invites audience members to join the League.

Greeters: The purpose of the greeters is to welcome those who attend the event and provide them with information. Hand a program and an index card to each person as they arrive. Explain that all audience questions are to be written on index cards. After writing a question, the attendee should raise his hand to signal a runner who will pick up the card and/or bring another card. A greeter may be asked to remain in the lobby area during the forum to assist latecomers. No campaign literature or campaign signs (this includes T-shirts with candidate name printed on it) are allowed inside the auditorium. When you see anything of this nature, explain that all campaign material must remain outside. Should the individual refuse to follow your instructions, call on the forum coordinator for assistance.

Runners: The primary purpose of the runner is to pick up or deliver index cards when an audience member raises his/her hand. The runner then delivers the question card to the reviewers' table. In a large auditorium, runners will be assigned to watch a specific section of the audience. It is important that runners keep their eyes on the audience for which they are responsible, and keep a supply of extra cards in their hand.

Timers: LWV forum procedures require that candidates are afforded equal speaking time. Timers are responsible for keeping time while candidates are speaking and signaling the candidates at different intervals during the allotted speaking time. It is helpful to have one volunteer monitor the clock, and a second to signal the elapsed time. Traditionally, paddles have been used to signal both the candidate and the moderator; some venues may be equipped with lights. The moderator is responsible for enforcing the time limit.

Question Reviewers: These volunteers review questions submitted by the audience, and provide the moderator with questions to ask of the candidates. Please see next page for detailed job description.

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Reviewing Questions from the Audience

Reviewer Selection: It is preferable to have three question reviewers, if possible; two at the minimum. Reviewers should be drawn from more than one organization to ensure balance. Reviewers should know enough about the issues likely to be raised at the forum to identify the priority concerns, but they do not need to be experts. In political forums, it may be advisable to have one or more of the reviewers from a district not represented by the candidates.

Reviewers' Goals: Create civility. Avoid repetition. Avoid questions that will evoke a "yes/no" answer. Prioritize questions so that the most important (to the audience) are asked and so that more people in the audience will hear answers to their questions.

Guidelines:
- Discuss methodology with the moderator before the forum. Explain what you are doing and emphasize the importance of using the questions the reviewers provide. Some moderators may be inclined to pose questions of their own; the League's goal is to have candidates answer audience questions.
- Read all submitted questions. Group them by subject.
- Prioritize the subjects/questions. Depending on the structure of the forum, it may be that a major topic has been amply covered before the Q & A; reviewers may decide that enough has been said. Cover a variety of topics relevant to the office.
- Consolidate questions that address a single subject. Write a NEW question that covers the nuances of the submitted questions. More than one question may be needed to address a complex topic.
- Many questions submitted will have a long lead-in. Get past the lead-in (often a diatribe) and get to the heart of the question.
- Re-write questions so they are clear to the general public who may not be familiar with government policy jargon. Often submissions embody an important question but are written in a way that they may be difficult to understand. It is permissible to clean them up.
- Use questions on topics that have not been addressed.
- Allow a question to be addressed to a single candidate if necessary; other candidates will be given the opportunity to comment.
- Discard questions that are obvious or veiled personal attacks.
- Discard frivolous questions.
- Make the questions as simple as possible, whether they are consolidations written by the screeners or edited submissions.