



## League of Women Voters of Port Washington Manhasset

### Policy for Candidate Events

#### 1. Purpose of Our League's Policy for Candidate Events

Voter service has made the League of Women Voters the foremost nonpartisan volunteer organization in the political arena today. Voter Service is at the heart of the League, core to our mission, and core to the public trust we engender.

Candidates are willing to appear on our platforms and provide information for our Voters Guides because they have confidence that they will be treated fairly and that the material will not be used for partisan purposes. This same reputation secures the confidence placed in our material by other organizations, newspapers and interested citizens.

This policy is intended to lay out key policy tenets for events that involve the LWV PWM orchestrating public conversations, forums, or information sessions between candidates for public office and the constituents whose votes they seek.

#### II. Core Principles

Our League requires each of the following principles to guide all aspects of Voter Services — from outreach to candidates and publicity, through event management and follow up.

**1. The League is nonpartisan.**

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization, never supporting or opposing any candidate or party

**2. No "Empty chair" events are allowed.**

The LWV does not permit "empty chair" events: two or more candidates for each seat must be present — or more than the number of open seats in an at-large election.

**3. No substitution for a candidate is allowed.**

Should a candidate not be able to attend an event, or have to arrive late, no other person can substitute for the candidate, either in person or virtually. Similarly, no written or recorded statement may be accepted in lieu of active participation by a candidate.

**4. Unauthorized recording is not allowed. No partial video or transcript is allowed.**

The League maintains the right to record the event and publish it on LWV-controlled electronic pages. In accordance with League policy, audio or video recording by authorized members of the media will be permitted only if agreed to by all of the candidates present. No other recording will be allowed. No partial transcript or recording may be published without written permission from the League.

**5. Only certified candidates can be included.**

Only those candidates who are certified on the official ballot may participate in League candidate events.

**6. Distribution or display of candidate campaign literature, campaign-related materials, or political paraphernalia is prohibited.**

The use of props, charts or visuals and the display of campaign literature is prohibited. Also prohibited are displays of candidate or issue preference (whether wearables such as buttons and t-shirts or backgrounds, either virtual or physical). At in-person events, such materials may not be distributed or displayed at the event venue.

**7. All events require agreement on rules/procedures in advance.**

Every event will be governed by the above principles and a set of rules agreed by all candidates (and their campaign managers). These rules will include the moderator's being from outside the district and the arbiter of the appropriateness of questions and the arbiter of event process; the sequence/rotation of speaking; the maximum duration of opening/closing statements and questions/answers; how questions from the public will be submitted; and how the timekeeper will signal candidates.

Although rules may vary, depending on the event, the principles will not — and once candidates agree to a set of rules, those rules will not change without all candidates and the moderator agreeing. A sample set of rules/procedures for virtual forums is attached.

**8. LWV events will seek to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, not simply outreach to marginalized local populations in our communities but also by seeking to accommodate those with disabilities, both among the public and candidates.**

### **III. Promulgation of Core Principles and Event Rules/Procedures**

Communicating these core principles broadly and consistently to candidates, campaigns, and the public sets expectations about our candidate events and reduces confusion that could tarnish trust. Hence, all members of our Board and our League should take responsibility and use initiative to ensure they are communicated, at least as follows:

**1. Providing core principles and rules/procedures during outreach to candidates and campaigns about participating in League events.**

**2. Requiring all candidates and their campaign managers both to acknowledge receipt of our rules/procedures and also to agree to conform to them.**

**3. Ensuring that publicity about and during the event promotes League policy.**

Advance publicity must have explicit language asserting the LWV PWM is “Nonpartisan” and follows the “No Empty Chair” rule. During events, besides reading the agreed event rules in their entirety, LWV host(s) and moderator should look for ways to market the core principles (by text, signage, shared screen, voicing).

**4. Posting core principles and forum procedures on the LWV PWM website.**

**5. Following up after events.**

When “No Empty Chair” requires cancellation of an event, it is appropriate for the President or Voter Services to send a press release, a letter to the editor, and/or to post the reason on the LWV of PWM website. Such a statement should focus on the importance of candidates speaking directly to voters. It should avoid partisan remarks.



## Procedures for Candidates Virtual Forums<sup>1</sup>

1. The moderator will be a member of the League of Women Voters from outside the district.
2. Candidates' opening statements will be given in alphabetical order. The same order will be for opening and closing statements.
3. Each candidate will be allowed three (3) minutes for an opening statement. *If there are many candidates, the moderator may limit the opening statements to two (2) minutes.*
4. After all candidates have spoken, the moderator will open the meeting with questions from the audience, submitted electronically before and during the forum. Electronic addresses for questions will be publicized with the forum, and available on the PWM website.
5. The moderator will be the arbiter of whether questions are appropriate, repetitive, or abusive.
6. Each candidate will be given one-and-a-half (1 1/2) minutes to answer each question. At the moderator's discretion, the time for a response may be reduced, as long as it is the same for everyone. There will be no rebuttal. Questions may be addressed to a specific candidate or to candidates in general, although all candidates will be given an opportunity to answer any question addressed to a specific individual.
7. The moderator will attempt to rotate the order of responses for each question.
8. A League member will act as timekeeper. One-half minute from the end of any given time period, the timekeeper will warn the speaker by a prearranged signal. When the time is up, the speaker will be allowed to finish the sentence. Repeatedly speaking past the deadline may result in a candidate being muted.
9. Candidates will have two (2) minutes for a closing statement.
10. Since the purpose of the meeting is to determine the candidates' views, no substitute for an in-person speaker will be allowed to appear should a candidate be unable to attend. No written or recorded statement may be provided in lieu of active participation by a candidate. Forums require two or more candidates for each seat to be present. The use of props, charts or visuals and the display of campaign literature is prohibited.
11. In accordance with League policy, audio or video recording by authorized members of the media will be permitted only if agreed to by all of the candidates present. The League maintains the right to record the forum and publish it on LWV-controlled electronic pages. No other recording will be allowed. No partial transcript or recording may be published without written permission from the League.

Candidate's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Office for which you are running: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please email this signed form to the Chair of Voter Services.**

<sup>1</sup> The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that never supports or opposes any candidate or political party. These procedures may be modified by agreement among the LWV and all participating candidates. In no case will a forum take place without at least two candidates contesting a seat ("no empty chair"). The moderator may change timing as needed to serve the public interest and is the arbitrator of all decisions during the debate.