



PO Box 18187
Portland ME 04112



(207) 622-0256



info@lwwme.org

GUIDELINES: LOCAL LEAGUE CHAPTER FORUMS

02/28/2026 — Amended and Readopted by LWVME

Local League of Women Voters chapters in Maine may sponsor candidate forums for state legislative and local candidate races for elected office. Such forums will provide fair and impartial treatment of candidates, will not promote or advance one candidate over another, and will make no reference to an issue advocacy position taken by the League of Women Voters of Maine.

The forums are designed to meet five goals:

- to educate the public about the issues in the campaign,
- to provide an opportunity for voters to hear candidates discuss those issues,
- to allow the public to learn about candidates' qualifications for office,
- to stimulate public interest and participation in the elections, and
- to provide an opportunity for the candidates to engage the public.

Any locally sponsored candidate forum must invite every candidate who has met the legal qualifications so that their name will be printed on the ballot. In addition, write-in candidates who have demonstrated significant community support and an active campaign may be invited at the discretion of local League leadership. Invited candidates must formally accept the invitation to participate in a forum either by email or by sending a letter of intent no later than two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled forum.

If one or more of the invited candidates in a contested race declines to attend (or fails to appear at) the forum, the forum may go forward if at least two candidates for the office accept the invitation and attend the forum. In an uncontested race, the local League may decide to go forward as long as the candidate panel includes candidates for other districts or offices.

If one or more of the confirmed participants fails to appear or cancels on the day of the forum, the remaining participant(s) may present their views and take questions from the audience.

Except as described above, no candidate should appear at a League event by themselves. State legislative offices include Maine State House and Maine State Senate. Local offices are broadly defined as School Board/Committee, City/Town Council, County Commissioner, Water Board, Sewer Board, Sheriff, District Attorney, or any other county or locally elected official, board, or committee.

Candidate forums may be co-sponsored with other organizations that are non-partisan and do not endorse candidates. Exceptions may be made for mainstream news media that endorse candidates on their editorial pages as long as the endorsement comes after the sponsored event.

The local League may choose a nonpartisan, unaligned moderator or facilitator who has demonstrated skill in managing such events.

Useful Links:

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