



Voters Services Policies

As approved by the Board of Directors Nov. 18, 2009 and revised March 17, 2010; July 25, 2010; Nov. 16, 2011; July 27, 2012; July 17, 2013; Sep. 16, 2015; July 19, 2017; Nov. 15, 2017; Nov. 28, 2018; Feb. 24, 2019; July 17, 2019

These policies and procedures are intended to conform to those of LWVTX. (See the LWVTX policies at www.lwvtexas.org.) This document expands, clarifies, or applies the policies and procedures as they relate to LWV-CC.

Candidate Debates and Forums

1. **Jurisdictions.** LWV-CC may conduct candidate debates and forums for U.S. Representatives, state Senators and Representatives, regional candidates, and local candidates in Collin County. If any jurisdiction overlaps one or more other local League areas, we will work together to eliminate confusion.
2. **Debates vs forums.** For federal candidates, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) defines a debate as an event that includes at least two candidates and allows them to appear concurrently, in face-to-face confrontations, with opportunities to respond to each other. The FEC defines a forum or other non-debate candidate appearance as a place, meeting, or medium where ideas and views on particular issues are exchanged.
3. **Nonpartisan policy.** All candidates will be treated fairly and equally at all candidate events. LWV-CC will not support or oppose any political party or candidate.
4. **Contested races.** All candidates in contested races for the same position will be invited to participate in a debate or forum – i.e., all candidates from all parties who have filed for the position with the appropriate authority and may ultimately appear on the ballot. Independent and write-in candidates will also be included if they have met the state requirements for such candidacies. Only qualified candidates will be allowed to participate, and no substitute may stand in for a candidate, either to read a statement or to distribute campaign literature. Candidates in uncontested races may not be speakers at a debate or forum; however, they may be introduced.
5. **Primary elections.** For debates and forums during the primary elections, a race will be considered contested if at least two persons are running for the same position, even if they are in different parties, including parties that do not conduct primary elections, or have filed to run as independents.

6. **Invitations.** As soon after the filing deadline as possible, an invitation will be sent to the candidates by email. The invitation should specify which races are included and the format. If the event is to be broadcast, the candidate will be asked to agree to a waiver for LWV-CC distribution of content per LWVTX policies and procedures.
7. **Location.** A debate or forum must be open to the public, in a place that will not seem to exclude some potential audience. Non-debate candidate events for federal offices **MUST** be held at a tax-exempt school, college or university.
8. **Rules and format.** The rules and format will be clearly communicated to the candidates and to the attendees:
 - An LWV-CC moderator will ensure that all candidates have an equal opportunity to address the audience and answer questions.
 - The Q&A forum format will allow each candidate a specified amount of time to make an opening statement. Then questions from the audience will be addressed to the appropriate candidates, who will be given equal time to respond. Each candidate will be allowed a specified amount of time for a closing statement. Order of candidate remarks will be rotated. Questions should be directed to an office, or all candidates, but not to an individual. The format can be either oral or written questions. Written questions from the audience should be screened for personal attacks or other inappropriate language. The audience should be informed that written questions may be altered or may not be used at all due to factors such as similar questions, length of question, inappropriate language or topic, questions that seem to be directed at individual candidates, and the amount of time available. This format requires at least two candidates for each type of office/jurisdiction to appear, but they may be running for different seats – e.g. two candidates for a city council or school board, but different places. For federal races, however, at least two candidates for the same seat must participate.
 - The debate format will be similar to the Q&A forum format, except that it will feature two or more candidates for the same specific seat and will allow them time to respond to each other.
 - A candidate fair format may be used in which audience members speak informally with candidates with facilitation by an LWV-CC member. This format does not require at least two candidates for each office or type of office to appear, although all candidates for the included offices must be invited.
 - Candidates will not be allowed to make personal attacks against other candidates.
 - Candidate literature should be placed at the back or outside the room. It may not be placed on seats or handed out to attendees as they enter or leave the room. Only small items are permitted (e.g., cards, brochures, flyers), not large signs or banners.
 - LWV-CC may provide membership information and orally invite membership.
 - Donations from candidates or political parties should not be solicited or accepted.

- The audience should be asked to silence their phones as a matter of courtesy. The audience should be informed that photos may be taken if the camera is silent and does not block anyone's view, flash is turned off, and no tripod is used. Photographs may not be taken with LWV members and individual candidates in order to avoid the appearance of endorsement.
 - The audience should be informed that unauthorized videos are not allowed and that candidates may not use video for campaign purposes. Video authorization may be given if it will be publicly available in its entirety on a nonpartisan site. Forum videos and links to them should be retained on website and social media up to one month after the election and then removed.
 - A photo/video release notice will be posted at the venue, based on guidelines from LWVUS.
 - The audience may not hold candidate or party endorsement signs.
9. **Co-sponsorship.** See LWVTX policies and procedures for guidelines. A co-sponsor or its leadership may not have endorsed a candidate as of the date of the debate or forum.
 10. **Assisting Other Organizations.** LWV-CC may assist other organizations with candidate forums in accordance with LWV-CC and LWVTX guidelines.
 11. **Broadcasting a debate.** See LWVTX policies and procedures for guidelines.

Voters Guides

1. **Jurisdictions.** LWV-CC will produce a Voters Guide that includes candidates and/or ballot issues that will be on the ballots in Collin County that are not included in a LWV-TEF Voters Guide. These will include candidates for U.S. Representative, state Senator and Representative, county, city, school board, and/or other district elections. If any jurisdiction overlaps one or more other local League areas, we will work together to eliminate confusion.
2. **Nonpartisan policy.** The LWV-CC's nonpartisan policy should always be printed in a prominent place on the front page of the Voters Guide. Questions for candidates should be fair, balanced, and nonpartisan.
3. **Contested races.** The Voters Guide will include all candidates from all parties who have filed for the position with the appropriate authority and may ultimately appear on the ballot, regardless of whether the race is contested or not. Independent and write-in candidates will also be included if they have met the state requirements for such candidacies.
4. **Primary elections.** For primary elections, the guide will include all candidates for the position from all parties, regardless of whether the candidate is selected through a primary election or some other party procedure, or has filed to run as an independent. The guide will also include candidates for county chairs of political parties, even though they will not appear on the ballot in the general election.
5. **Instructions to candidates.** As soon after the filing deadline as possible, explicit instructions and questions will be sent to the candidates by email. Candidate contact and tracking may

be automated using VOTE411 if LWV-CC participates in that Voters Guide software. We will clearly articulate the ground rules for inclusion in the Voters Guide, e.g.:

- Word limitations so candidates know that any responses over the word/character limit will be truncated at that number.
- No editing for spelling or grammar mistakes so candidates cannot say their answers were changed by the LWV-CC.
- What will be printed if the candidate does not respond, i.e., “No response from the candidate.”
- References to opponents are not allowed. General references to other political parties may be allowed. If a response is deemed inappropriate, the entire response will be deleted. The candidate will be notified in advance of the Voters Guide publication deadline and given the opportunity to amend the response before the publication deadline. In place of the inappropriate response the guide will state, “Candidate’s response did not meet the criteria listed in this Voters Guide.”
- The Voters Guide will include a list of all candidates’ website addresses and contact information, if provided to us.
- These rules should be summarized in the Voters Guide.

6. **Publication and distribution.** LWV-CC Voters Guides will be made available online at www.lwvcollin.org before the start of early voting. Questions and responses may be viewed in VOTE411 if LWV-CC participates in that Voters Guide software.