

## Volunteer Responsibilities

1. Greeters for both candidates and attendees.
2. Hospitality.
3. Moderator—try to secure a person residing outside of the voting area.
4. Screeners of questions—recommend one community person such as an attorney, one PTA representative with no personal ties to any candidate and one other person from the cosponsoring organization or from the community.
5. Timers—one to keep track of time and one to hold up signs to signal candidates.
6. Person to open the forum, lead the Pledge of Allegiance—may be the moderator or president of the sponsoring organization(s).
7. People to hand out blank index cards, pick up questions and deliver them to the screeners.
8. Publicity—articles for the newspaper, radio announcements, cable announcements, flyers for PTA newsletters, etc.

## The Forum

1. Attendees should be given blank index cards as they enter to write questions for the candidates. Each index card should have only one question and indicate to whom the question is directed. A questions may be directed to one or all candidates.
2. Pledge of Allegiance and welcome.
3. Moderator should go over the rules:
  - Each candidate may have a one minute opening speech and a one minute closing speech.
  - All questions will be in writing.
  - All questions will be screened.
  - If a question is directed to a specific candidate, he/she will have two minutes to respond. All other candidates may have one minute to respond if they so desire.
  - If a question is directed to all candidates, each candidate will have one minute to respond. The moderator should vary the order in which he/she calls on the candidates.
4. Timers should hold up signs to signal speakers:
  - Green—start
  - Yellow—30 seconds left
  - Red—stop
5. The moderator should state that there will be no verbal interaction between the audience and the candidates during the forum.
6. Begin the forum—while candidates are giving their opening statements, screeners can begin sorting questions to be asked of the candidates. After the opening statements, the moderator asks the candidates the written screened questions.
7. End of forum –moderator or other designee should close and thank everyone for attending, reminding them of the voting date.



## How to Plan, Conduct, and Participate in a Candidates' Forum

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## Background

Since elected officials' decisions significantly affect the well being of children and youth, it is a PTA responsibility to disseminate as much factual, objective information as possible during election campaigns to help the community make informed choices. Questioning ALL candidates during an election campaign does not violate the National PTA nonpartisan policy. This publication is designed to provide guidelines for organizing a forum for all candidates.

*“The organization shall not—directly or indirectly—participate or intervene (in any way, including the publishing or distributing of statements) in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, an candidate for public office: or devoting more than an insubstantial part of its activities to attempting to influence legislation by propaganda or otherwise:*

*-National PTA Bylaws, Article III*

- The forum is neutral territory for a sharing of philosophy, ideas and information—**NOT FOR CAMPAIGNING!**
- No campaign literature is to be distributed inside the forum room, no buttons, or other campaign promotions are to be worn, etc.

**PTA never endorses a candidate, but does take positions on issues that affect children and youth.**

## Preliminaries

1. Form a committee.
2. Determine whether PTA will sponsor the forum alone or with another nonpartisan organization such as the League of Women Voters or a branch of the American Association of University Women.
3. Set the date and obtain a facility that is centrally located, if possible.
4. Draft invitations to candidates. Be sure to include:
  - Complete information on date, time and place
  - Rules of the forum (e.g. there will be only written questions, time allowed for candidates' responses)
  - Rules pertaining to campaign literature
  - A request for any information needed from the candidate for promotion of the forum
  - Name, address, telephone number, and email address of person to contact to confirm acceptance or to ask for further information
  - Deadline for the candidate to respond
5. Obtain home addresses of ALL CANDIDATES and send invitations by certified mail with a return receipt requested. The signed, returned receipts should be kept on file.

## Physical Arrangements

1. Adequate seating for attendees.
2. Seating for candidates should be in the form of a head table; preferably elevated so they are visible to the audience. The table should also be draped.
3. Adequate sound system with microphones available to rotate between the candidates and a separate one for the moderator.
4. Tables for any refreshments and for any literature pertaining to the forum, such as agendas or programs. Campaign literature should be distributed **ONLY OUTSIDE** the facility, **NOT INSIDE**.
5. Table for screeners of written questions and podium/lectern for the moderator. It would be helpful if the moderator also had a stool to sit on while candidates are responding to questions and giving opening and closing remarks.



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