



Election Forums

As part of our Voter Service mission to provide unbiased, factual information about candidates and ballot measures, the League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County (LWVBWC) sponsors election forums. Our goal is to help citizens make their own choices and decisions when casting their ballot and to encourage them to vote.

In compliance with the League of Women Voters non-partisan policy, the League shall not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. The forums will be conducted in such a manner as to avoid creating the impression that the League favors one candidate over another.

1. Candidates will be invited to participate in LWVBWC forums if they have successfully filed for office with the Whatcom County Auditor's Office.
2. Questions prepared by the Forum Question Committee will include input from diverse voices and reflect various concerns and perspectives in our community.
3. All candidates participating in the forums have equal time to speak and they are all asked to respond to the same questions. Questions will not be shared with candidates in advance.
4. The League endeavors to foster a civil discussion of the issues at these events.
5. Forums are open to the public free of charge and advertised widely in the media.
6. LWVBWC is the owner of the video recordings of candidate forums, and all participants release any interest in the recording by virtue of their participation. Recording of the forums by others, including posting on any internet platform, is expressly prohibited without the permission of the LWVBWC, and such permission will authorize only reproduction of the entire forum. No candidate or other entity will be allowed to use or edit the footage for campaign purposes. Interested persons or organizations are welcome to link to the video via the LWVBWC website or the City of Bellingham YouTube channel.
7. The Voter Services Chair and committee shall recommend which primary and general election races to include in the forums.
8. Detailed guidelines and ground rules for election forums shall reflect the League's mission and will be maintained by the Voter Service committee.
9. The League will not present a forum when the office has only one candidate listed on the ballot.

10. If there are only two candidates for a position and one of the candidates either refuses an invitation to a candidate forum or accepts the invitation but fails to appear for the event, the forum will be cancelled and the reason for the cancellation will be made known on the League's website and by reports to all relevant media.

When candidates for similar positions participate in a single forum, such as multiple positions on a council or school board, and one (or more) of the candidates either refuses an invitation to the forum or accepts the invitation but fails to appear for the event, leaving at least two candidates in attendance, the forum will go forward as planned and absences will be explained. [Note: in this instance, past practice has allowed candidates to offer a statement in lieu of being present, so this practice will continue through the 2023 election season.]

(Adopted & Board Approved August 14, 2023)