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POLICY ON CANDIDATE FORUMS FOR FEDERAL AND STATEWIDE ELECTIONS

04/27/2024 – Amended and Readopted by LWVME and LWVME Education Fund

The League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME) and League of Women Voters of Maine Education Fund (LWVME Ed Fund) intends to sponsors nonpartisan candidate forums for the offices of United States House of Representative, United States Senate, and Governor of the State of Maine in the fall preceding a general election. Such forums will provide fair and impartial treatment of candidates and will not promote or advance one candidate over another. Although questions related to issues are appropriate, forums will make no reference to an issue advocacy position taken by the League of Women Voters of Maine and questions from the moderator on said issues will be impartially asked.

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 face-to-face,
- 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.

We believe that these goals are best served by including those candidates with significant district-wide voter support and interest. After careful consideration, the LWVME and LWVME Ed Fund have adopted criteria that are nonpartisan, capable of objective application, and understandable to candidates and the public.

To be invited to participate in a LWVME/LWVME Ed Fund sponsored forum for Governor, United States Senate or United States House of Representatives, a

candidate must:

1. win the nomination of their party in the primary election
- or**
2. qualify for the ballot as an unenrolled or independent candidate.

Invited candidates must e-mail or send a letter of intent to participate no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled forum. A forum may not be held until after the deadlines for both 1. and 2. have passed.

If the forum is to be broadcast, invited candidates must sign the League's broadcast agreement prior to the forum or they will not be able to participate—no exceptions. The LWVME/LWVME Ed Fund will record and make available to the public in their entire audio and video of sponsored forums.

If one or more of the invited candidates declines to attend (or fails to appear at) the forum, the forum may go forward only if at least two of the candidates for that office accept the invitation and attend the forum. The LWVME and the LWVME Ed Fund will not sponsor forums in elections where the candidate is unopposed.

There will be no substitutes or stand-ins for the candidates.

The LWVME/LWVME Ed Fund may opt to cosponsor a forum with other organizations as long as those potential partner organizations do not endorse candidates or do not have a 501(c)(4) affiliate organization that endorses 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 LWVME/Education Fund may designate a qualified moderator or facilitator who is not affiliated with any side [candidate] in the campaign.

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