



Hosting a Candidate Forum

Holding a special chapter meeting featuring a candidate forum prior to the November 2016 elections is a great way to meet with candidates and to hear their views on the issues that matter most to NARFE members.

Hosting a candidate forum is easy. Simply work with other chapters in your congressional district to hold a joint chapter event and invite candidates for Congress or their representative to attend. Then work with your federation legislative officer to coordinate the event. You also can work with your federation to organize a statewide event for Senate candidates.

Planning Your Event

Inviting Candidates

The first thing you should do is pick a date and location and submit official scheduling requests to the campaign offices of **all** candidates for the office using the [sample request letter](#). Shortly thereafter, follow up the initial request with a phone call, since schedules may be tight. Many campaign offices now also make it possible to request a meeting on their website. You can obtain office contact information from the candidate's website, the Board of Elections or your local party office.

Timing of Forum

Decide if you want to host the forum before or after the primary election. If you hold the event after, then you only need to invite the winners of the primary, including any major third party candidates. If you host the event before the primary, you should invite all the candidates who may appear on the ballot. Consider how many candidates you will have to include when deciding the timing and format for your forum.

Working with the Campaigns

Work with the campaigns to finalize plans for the forum, including the format and the date and location if the ones proposed don't work for the candidates.

A few format questions to finalize with the campaigns include:

- Time limits for responses, rebuttals, introductory/closing statements.
- How will questions from the audience be taken (i.e. directly from the audience or collected cards)?



- Will the media be invited to cover the event? Publicity could boost NARFE's local profile but candidates may be more forthcoming at media-free events.
- Are surrogates welcome or do you only want to hear from the candidates?

Run of Show for Your Event

NARFE Members Arrive

NARFE members from invited chapters arrive, mingle briefly and take their seats.

The designated emcee moves to the front of the room and introduces the event.

Introductions

The emcee gives a brief introduction about the issues impacting NARFE members (key issues can be found in the [Fact Sheets and Issue Briefs Toolkit](#)).

The emcee introduces the panel of guests (if multiple congressional campaigns sent representatives) or the single speaker (if only one). You can request short biographies from the campaigns to plan this introduction.

The emcee describes the format of the event and requests that members in attendance remain polite throughout the forum. Misconduct and rudeness should not be tolerated.

Conclusion

The emcee thanks the candidates once again and adjourns the event.

Meet-and-Greet

The emcee thanks the candidate(s) and opens up the event for individual NARFE members to meet and speak with them, if the candidates have agreed to this.

Following the Event

No later than a week following the forum, send [thank you letters](#) to the campaigns.

Also, don't forget to report the forum in your chapter newsletter and email advocacyinaction@narfe.org to tell the Legislative Department about your forum.