

GUIDELINES FOR PTA WHEN SPONSORING A PUBLIC FORUM

Remember PTA may take a stand on issues but not endorse candidates:

- To take a stand, the PTA membership must be given notice of the meeting where the issue will be discussed and a vote taken to support or not support the issue
- If the membership is divided on the issue, PTA may choose to remain neutral and focus on informing the public and its membership on the facts rather than taking a stand

When hosting a forum to discuss an issue or hear from candidates for election, PTA should be sure to:

- Ask a non-biased person to facilitate the forum (or someone who can keep their opinion out of the debate during the forum)
- Invite proponents of both sides of the issue (panel or candidates)
- Invite all candidates running for election (some may not choose to come)
- Research the issues – know both sides of the issue

If a panel has been assembled, the facilitator may ask each side to give a short (timed) overview of the issue from their point of view before opening the question and answer session. Or the facilitator may give the overview with information provided by the panel members.

- Have 3 x 5 cards for audience members to write questions for the panel or candidates
- These cards will be given to the facilitator
- This keeps hostile people from being disruptive or monopolizing the discussion
- Questions that are similar can be combined
- The facilitator should be prepared to control the discussion if it gets out of control.

Panel members or candidates should be given written ground rules before beginning.

These ground rules should be read to the audience. Also, ground rules may include:

- Courtesy and respect for others will be expected
- Address the issues not people
- Do not interrupt
- The facilitator may interrupt those who do not follow the ground rules
- Both sides on the issues will be presented