



Colorado Farm Bureau Political Involvement Booklet



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Candidate Forum Format and Guidelines:

Candidate forums are a wonderful way to help your community/county/district get to know their candidates for elected office. This is NOT a debate. There is no time allowed for rebuttal to any questions. If you are dealing with a primary election race between republican candidates or democrat candidates, we *highly* recommend doing a forum versus a debate.

Please keep in mind that with a forum, candidates will be addressing the moderator and/or public audience with answering questions and not directed towards each other.

Forum Format & Guidelines:

- Select a moderator for your event. It is important for this to be a neutral person that is not tied to any campaign.
- The moderators will welcome the candidates and attendees to the Forum. The format for the evening and rules for the candidates will be announced. Be sure to have an American Flag and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
- If you have written questions being submitted the night of the event, have them all submitted prior to the start of the forum.
- Candidates should be allowed a period of time to introduce themselves. We recommend THREE minutes at the most. Random order of introductions by candidates (consider drawing/flipping coin to see who goes first.)
- After introductions, the moderator(s) will begin the questions, rotating through each candidate to answer first. Each candidate should be given equal time to answer the question. We recommend TWO minutes. There should be a timer to alert the candidates when they thirty-seconds remaining and when they are out of time. Simply allow them to finish their thought when time expires.
- The forum should conclude by allowing each candidate to have a couple (two) minutes for closing statements. *Opening and Closing Statements should both be timed.
- We encourage you to make sure and allow for time following the forum for candidates to visit freely among their constituents and other candidates.

Recommended Options for questions:

- Allow for pre-submitted questions from the public to be sent in by a certain date to your committee in order to review and determine their appropriateness along with catching any repetitive questions.
- Your committee comes up with all the questions and no additional questions are gathered from the public.
- All questions are submitted the night of the event in writing by the public. This will require that you have a few people to read them before they are handed to the moderator to make sure they are appropriate and not duplicative.
- Combination of any of the above suggestions – some pre-determined questions and some questions that night from the public.
- We recommend always having a moderator read the questions versus allowing the public attendees to directly ask questions.

- If you prefer, you could also send your list of pre-submitted questions to the candidates in advance. Note that this will most likely make for candidates simply having prepared statements and not answering the questions off the cuff during the forum.

Again, please keep in mind that this is a **FORUM** and not a **debate**. Candidates will be addressing the moderator and/or public when answering questions. There will be no rebuttals to another candidate. They may address any issues during their Closing Statement. Encourage ALL candidates to act professionally towards the each other and their Constituents. Everyone should be mindful and respectful of the allotted times and questions being asked.

Candidate Debate Format and Guidelines:

If your county prefers to make it more of a DEBATE versus simply a forum, be sure you make that VERY clear to all of the participating candidates and public.

We recommend a similar format and guidelines to a forum setting. However, you would need to allow for the following:

- Each candidate will receive the same question to answer.
- Rotate back and forth each candidate answering first.
- The first candidate would get 90 seconds to answer.
- The second candidate would get 2 minutes to answer.
- The first candidate would get 60 seconds for a rebuttal.
- Make sure you have a timer and a bell to ring when time expires. Allow for 5 seconds to finish their thought.
- Be sure to have a set ending time for the debate and do an equal number of questions.

*Allow each candidate to set out their campaign literature on a table in the room.

*Be respectful at all times! Be sure to uphold the strong and positive non-partisan Farm Bureau reputation.

Initiatives Forum Format and Guidelines:

Initiative Forums are another great way to show political involvement in your county and help inform the public on pertinent issues they will see in the upcoming election.

You can host these in a similar fashion to a candidates' forum. You may also choose to address one or multiple ballot measures in conjunction with a candidates' forum.

Please be sure to allow for BOTH the pro and con (yes and no) side of each initiative to be heard.

There may be necessary questions that need to be asked regarding financial impact, timeline, public effect, etc...

Note that IF Colorado Farm Bureau State Board of Directors has already taken an active position on a proposed ballot measure, then the county farm bureau can so choose to have that yes or no position specifically advocated at a county event or candidate forum and make it clear to the public that CFB is in support or opposition to said specific measure.

If CFB or the County Farm Bureau has already taken a position on a measure (for example – No on Amendment 69) then the county can simply choose to have someone address the audience advocating our position and asking for a no vote.

Endorsements of Candidates for Political Office:

County Farm Bureaus who are classified as a 501(c)(5) tax exempt organization, can endorse candidates for public office, provided that this is not the primary function of the organization.

Please take these guidelines seriously as County Farm Bureau endorsements carry serious weight with candidates, political parties, and our members. As we all know perception is reality and we want to maintain that Farm Bureau is the leading grassroots organization that promotes the future of agriculture and protects rural values.

To assist members in identifying candidates that county farm bureaus have endorsed, CFB can publish county endorsements in our publications and on our website. County Farm Bureaus wishing to submit endorsements to CFB should send that information directly to Brent Boydston.

Guidelines:

- Counties should review which races they feel are germane to Farm Bureau members and to the political boundaries of the County Farm Bureau.
- Every effort should be made to meet with candidates from each political party; preferably this would be done following the primary. By meeting with all candidates, or inviting candidates to meet with the county Farm Bureau, it will show the non-partisan nature of Farm Bureau's political programs and will show credibility in your endorsement.
- Interview the candidates through the prism of "Farm Bureau policy" and "agriculture". Ask yourself, "Will the candidate be a good elected official for agriculture?"
While a certain issue may be of importance to you, it may not be a priority issue of importance to Farm Bureau and the agricultural industry.
- Do not let personal preference on issues not pertaining to agriculture and the future of the business in the Ag sector influence your decision.
- Don't be afraid to endorse both (all) candidates that you feel would benefit agriculture and your county Farm Bureau.
- **If your county Farm Bureau chooses to endorse a candidate or candidates, the decision to endorse needs to be done by your county board at an official county board meeting and recorded in the official county Farm Bureau minutes. It also needs to be communicated to county Farm Bureau members, CFB Public Policy staff and to the candidate.**
- Any external communications of the endorsement (i.e. local press) should be done by the candidate and not by the county Farm Bureau.
- Make sure the candidate understands that the endorsement is from the COUNTY Farm Bureau and not the Colorado Farm Bureau Federation and should be communicated as such.

Possible Questions to Ask:

- What is your vision for Colorado agriculture?
- What about agriculture in general?
- How do you plan to achieve your goals for agriculture?
- If there is a specific ag-related issue in your district/county (i.e. water, cattle, wildlife, peaches, etc.) ask questions about those issues as well as general agricultural issues.

- Agriculture is facing an ever increasing regulatory burden, often driven by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other environmental interests. How do you plan to protect agriculture from regulation that is so strict that it will put farmers and ranchers out of business? How would you use your office to make EPA and others aware of the effects their burdensome regulations have on agriculture?
- How informed are you on Colorado Water Law and water rights?
- Would you support additional water storage projects?
- What is your opinion on trans-basin diversions?
- How should the doctrine of prior appropriations be implemented in Colorado?

Additional Options for Candidates:

- Your county can hold candidate forums and invite all candidates to attend an open Q and A session in front of your County Board.
- Your county could do one-on-one personal interviews with each candidate and the County Board.
- Once endorsed, county Farm Bureaus can then host events for the candidates (i.e. meet & greet, rallies, picnics, etc...)
- Once endorsed, individual county Farm Bureau members may want to consider doing additional work to show support for that candidate (fundraising, make a contribution, send letters to the editor or op-ed pieces, etc.) This level of activity should be conducted by individual members and should not be conducted by the county Farm Bureau.
- To be clear, county Farm Bureaus should not, as an organization, be involved in fundraising, make financial contributions from the organization to campaigns, take out ads or do mailings on behalf of any candidate.
- County Farm Bureaus can choose to endorse candidates for each race or choose to endorse candidates in a select few amount of races. County Farm Bureaus can, after the interviewing process, choose not to endorse any candidate for a particular race.