

# CANDIDATE APPEARANCES

AT YOUR NONPROFIT OR EVENT

Published in cooperation with Nonprofit VOTE



**During the election season, candidates may appear at your nonprofit in one of three ways** – invited in their capacity 1) as a candidate, 2) as a public figure, or 3) on their own at a public event. Each scenario has different guidelines to ensure that their appearance remains nonpartisan.

## 1. Inviting candidates to an event in their capacity as candidates

Your nonprofit may want to invite candidates for office to a function or event to expose them to your work, develop relationships with future office holders, or for a purpose related to your ongoing programs.

*If you invite all the candidates to the SAME event:*

- Invite all candidates in the same race. They don't all have to come, but all must be invited.
- Remind candidates that they are attending as guests. Campaigning and political fundraising are prohibited.
- Remind the audience that it is a nonpartisan event.

*If you invite candidates to appear at DIFFERENT events:*

- Provide an equal opportunity to candidates for the same office, including as a similar time, venue, and presentation format.
- Prior to introducing the candidate, clarify for the audience that their appearance is not an endorsement and there will be additional opportunities to meet the other candidates.

## 2. Inviting candidates to an event in their capacity as a public figure

A nonprofit may invite a candidate to an event in their capacity as a recognized public figure, like an elected official or expert in their field. You might invite a candidate to speak because he or she 1) currently holds, or formerly held, public office; 2) is considered an expert in a non-political field, or; 3) is a celebrity or has led a distinguished public service, military, legal or other career. Under these circumstances only extend an invitation if:

- The candidate is chosen to speak solely for reasons other than their candidacy and speaks only in a non-candidate capacity.
- There is no mention of their candidacy during the presentation or event.
- The atmosphere is kept entirely nonpartisan and free of campaign activity (e.g. campaign brochures or materials are not out on a table).

*Keep in mind elected officials are candidates when running for re-election in a primary or general election. This is particularly important to take into account in the last two months leading up to the election when there are other candidates in the race.*

### 3. Candidates may attend your event on their own

Candidates may appear at a public event held by your nonprofit on their own initiative.

*In that case:*

- Take care that there is no actual or implied endorsement.
- Do not give the candidate an opportunity to address the gathering or distribute campaign literature.

#### Learn More

IRS - Fact Sheet on Election Year Activity (FS-2006-17), [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

Nonprofit Vote – Candidate Engagement Webinar