

## **INCLUSION OF POLITICAL CANDIDATES IN PBS 39 PROGRAMS**

PBS 39 presents political coverage and analysis as part of its overall public service and educational mission. During election years, PBS 39 offers programs specifically related to local, state and national elections.

Below is a review of PBS 39's working policies regarding candidate inclusion in such programming.

Our overarching goal is to help citizens be better informed, so they may choose to be involved in their government and the political process. Given our limited resources — financial, managerial, technical, and available air-time — we have created criteria for evaluating candidates. We are guided by a mix of research (such as polls), professional judgment, legal criteria and citizen input. It should be noted that there are sometimes competing interests regarding election issues: on the one hand, to provide the broadest possible range of ideas, issues and exposure to candidates; on the other hand, to provide the most useful and meaningful information, which may sometimes require selecting among ideas, issues and candidates. Our purpose is to give service to citizens, not candidates.

PBS 39 is frequently contacted by candidates requesting air-time or inclusion in a debate or other program. There is sometimes a presumption that the non-commercial nature of public television means that any person, by declaring his or her candidacy, should have open access to voters via PBS 39. This is not the case. The management of PBS 39 has responsibility for programming in political areas, as in all areas, within the policies established by the Federal Communications Commission.

During each election cycle, PBS 39 programming staff will develop specific plans based on the principles contained in this document. We will be consistent in the application of set forth criteria.

### **POLITICAL FORUMS/ DEBATES**

PBS 39 uses commonly accepted criteria for determining whether or not a candidate is included in a debate. No single criterion is paramount. Collectively, they allow PBS 39 to make an informed judgment about a given candidate's eligibility to participate.

WLVT reserves the right to limit the number of candidates participating in a political broadcast based on the below criteria:

- Must be a legally qualified candidate and be on the ballot as determined by the Pennsylvania State Board of Elections.
- Must have at least 5% support in recent voter surveys that are deemed a credible source by PBS 39.
- Is there an active campaign?
- Is there a campaign office, a staff, a phone number?
- In a major race, is there an office outside of the candidate's home?
- Is there funding apart from the candidate's own resources?
- Is there a discernible way of raising money?
- Is there campaign literature?

Before primaries have been held, there may be a number of active candidates, any one of whom could be a candidate in the general election. At this stage, a debate may well include some or all of these candidates in order to give citizens the *broadest* possible access as they form their views. However, later in the campaign, it may make sense to limit the number of candidates in a debate to those who will realistically determine the outcome of the election. At this later point, the greater service is giving citizens the most *in-depth* information possible.

WLVT will have content control of any political program that we produce for our broadcast. Sometimes we do collaborate with other media on political programming. However, those details are handled on a case-by-case basis.

PBS 39 reserves the right to decide which political races and campaigns will be given a broadcast or webcast program.