



SCETV Political Candidate Debate Policy

A vital part of the South Carolina SCETV and Public Radio (SCETV) mission is advancing good citizenship by producing and broadcasting quality local public affairs programming about South Carolina, including select political candidate debates. This policy clarifies SCETV's commitment to a fair and balanced process for debate invitations.

Discretion. SCETV, at its sole editorial discretion, decides which debates to offer on its statewide network for federal, state or local races. SCETV has sole discretion in determining which debate it will produce and broadcast.

Cancellation. SCETV reserves the right to cancel any scheduled debate.

FEC Rule. SCETV uses pre-established objective criteria in inviting candidates to participate in its debates based on the United States Supreme Court decision of *Arkansas v. Forbes in 1998*.

For all debates, SCETV applies the Federal Election Commission (FEC) rule requiring federal debates must include at least two (2) candidates, and debate sponsors must use certain "pre-established objective criteria" when inviting candidates to participate. To comply with Federal law, SCETV requires a minimum of two (2) candidates to participate for the agency to produce and broadcast a debate.

General Elections

Candidate Criteria. If SCETV determines that it will produce or broadcast any debates for any federal, state or local general elections, the pre-established objective criteria that a candidate must demonstrate to be included in the debate are:

- (1) The candidate must be a "legally qualified candidate" under FEC guidelines, based on the following:
 - (A) Has publicly announced his/her intention to run for office, is qualified under applicable law to hold office and has qualified for a place on the ballot; or
 - (B) Has publicly committed to seeking election by the write-in method and documents that he/she is conducting an active campaign, including has staffed campaign headquarters and is receiving press coverage.
- (2) The candidate must also meet at least three (3) of the following criteria:
 - (A) The candidate has been nominated for the current election by a political party recognized under state law;
 - (B) The candidate has public position statements on at least three (3) issues (e.g., in one or more press release, news story, campaign website, campaign brochure, speech or other public statement);
 - (C) The candidate has accepted at least \$10,000 in contributions for the current election (e.g., as documented in Federal Election Commission reports



available at www.fec.gov for federal candidates or equivalent campaign finance disclosure information for state or local candidates);

- (D) The candidate has received more than incidental press coverage (e.g., identification as a candidate for the current elections in at least five (5) bona fide print, online, radio, television or cable TV news stories); and/or,
- (E) The candidate has received five percent (5%) or more of support for the current election in a professionally conducted public opinion survey by an independent political pollster.

SCETV believes these criteria will ensure fairness and editorial integrity for any proposed debate. Names of the candidates participating in SCETV debates will be listed on the election page of the SCETV website at www.scetv.org/elections.

Primary Elections

Candidate Criteria. If SCETV determines that it will produce or broadcast any debates for any federal, state or local primary elections, the pre-established objective criteria that a candidate must demonstrate to be included in the debate are:

- (1) The candidate must be a “legally qualified candidate” under FEC guidelines, based on the following:
 - (A) Has publicly announced his/her intention to run for office, is qualified under applicable law to hold office and has qualified for a place on the ballot; or
 - (B) Has publicly committed to seeking election by the write-in method and documents that he/she is conducting an active campaign, including has staffed campaign headquarters and is receiving press coverage.
- (2) The candidate must also meet at least two (2) of the following criteria:
 - (A) The candidate has accepted at least \$10,000 in contributions for the current election (e.g., as documented in Federal Election Commission reports available at www.fec.gov for federal candidates or equivalent campaign finance disclosure information for state or local candidates);
 - (B) The candidate has public position statements on at least three (3) issues (e.g., in one or more press release, news story, campaign website, campaign brochure, speech or other public statement); and/or
 - (C) The candidate has received more than incidental press coverage (e.g., identification as a candidate for the current elections in at least five (5) bona fide print, online, radio, television or cable TV news stories

SCETV believes these criteria will ensure fairness and editorial integrity for any proposed debate. Names of the candidates participating in SCETV debates will be listed on the election page of the SCETV website at www.scetv.org/elections.



Sanctioned Debates. In some circumstances, SCETV may require primary debates to have official written permission or approval by a political party recognized under state law. If required, the “sanction” must come from the political party for which participating candidates represent. Circumstances that may require official written permission or approval may include inquiry or communication about debates from a political party subgroup.

Deadlines. The deadline for candidates to demonstrate they meet SCETV’s criteria for a debate is 4 p.m. CST on that day that is twenty-one (21) calendar days prior to the day of the scheduled debate. SCETV reserves the right to adjust these deadlines and will notify parties of any changes to these deadlines on the SCETV website.

Questions. Direct questions about this policy, and in parts herein, to the SCETV Communications Department.

SCETV Communications Department
1401 George Rogers Blvd.
Columbia, SC 29201
media@scetv.org
(803) 737-3337