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### **Candidates Answer Voters' Questions at 2023 Debates Sponsored by the Morristown Area League of Women Voters**

2023 is an important election year for New Jersey. **All** State Senators and Assembly members, many County officials (Commissioner, Clerk, Sheriff) and many Municipal and Board of Education officials are on the ballot. The League of Women Voters has a century-long reputation of providing unbiased information to voters through candidate forums, candidate questionnaires, voter registration drives and community voter education events.

Nonpartisan candidate forums are a key element in promoting an informed and engaged electorate, which is the very basis of democracy. League candidate forums cover elections in all races, from the most local grassroots level to the national level. This year, the Morristown Area League and its partners reached out to candidates throughout Morris County and NJ Legislative Districts 25 and 26 to schedule nonpartisan debates. We were able to present the voters with a number of successful debates this year, but many could not be arranged because of candidates' lack of response, refusal to take part, significant delays in responding, or requests for partisan conditions. Numerous attempts were made to contact candidates beginning in early August.

“The League applauds and thanks those candidates who have participated or agreed to participate in this year’s debates. By their willingness to answer questions posed by members of their communities, these candidates have provided voters with a unique opportunity to learn where they stand on important issues in a civil, nonpartisan setting” said Nancy Hedinger, President of the League of Women Voters of the Morristown Area “When a candidate declines to participate, it is a lost opportunity for their voters and democracy suffers.”

League debates are strictly nonpartisan and expertly controlled by a League moderator who is fully trained according to FEC guidelines, election law, and the League’s rigorous standards. No appearance of bias is allowed. Questions are solicited from the public online and screened by the League and its co-sponsors to eliminate abusive language, questions of a personal nature, and inaccurate phrasing. Only those questions on issues the candidate can be reasonably expected to address if elected are used.

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose candidates for public office or political parties. In order for a debate to be strictly nonpartisan, in a party election, at least one candidate from two parties must participate. For the Board of Ed, there must be at least as many candidates as seats. Listed below are forums that were successfully hosted and those that could

not be scheduled. **All debates can be viewed on the LWV Morristown Areas YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/morristownarealeagueofwomenvoters>.**

The League will continue to seek to fulfill our mission of educating and engaging voters by offering nonpartisan candidate forums. We encourage the voters to reach out to their candidates and urge them to participate.

### **Past Forums (watch)**

<https://www.youtube.com/c/morristownarealeagueofwomenvoters>

#### **Dover Mayor**

Participants: James P. Dodd, Dennis Touhey

#### **Board of Aldermen**

Participants: Claudia P. Toro, Gaile Rodriguez, Sergio Rodriguez, Wendy Huron Carmona, Michael J. Scarneo, William F. Shuler, Arturo B. Santana, William R. Inglis,

#### **Dover Board of Ed**

Participants: Krista Seanor, Lorena Garcia, Angela Ramos Gama

#### **Harding Board of Ed**

Participants: George Boyan, Alexander Anastasiou, Abhinov Singh

#### **Madison Council**

Participants: Mike Martinez, John J. Forte, Robert E. Landrigan, Melissa Honohan

#### **Madison Board of Ed**

Participants: Lisa Ellis, Deirdre M. Ostrowski, Eric Fontes, David Duran

#### **Parsippany Board of Ed**

Participants: Nilesh M. Bagdai, Falgun Bakhtarwala, Balakrishna "Bala" Samaga, Cassandra Cogan, Wendy Wright, Nicole Dellafave, Lily Benavides, Deitria Smith-Snead, Timothy P. Berrios, Andrew Choffo, Matthew DeVitto, Kendra Von Achen

### **Upcoming Forums**

#### **Morristown Council, Ward 4 10/16**

Participating: Bruce Meringolo, Christopher J. Russo

#### **Morristown Seat, Morris School District Board of Ed 10/16**

Participating: Arielle Shack, Elisabeth Wall

#### **Hanover Township Board of Ed 10/19**

Participating—Christina Dunne, Brian Gibbons, Karen Mascolo

### **Unscheduled Forums**

#### **Morris County Commissioners**

Agreed: Jonathan Sackett

#### **Morris County Clerk**

Agreed: Carolyn (Carrie) O'Brien

#### **LD 25 Senate**

Agreed: Christine Clarke

#### **LD 25 Assembly**

Agreed: Jonathan Torres, Diane Salvatore

#### **LD 26 Senate**

#### **LD 26 Assembly**

Agreed: Brian Bergen

#### **Denville Township Council at Large**

Agreed: Patrick Bieger

#### **Florham Park Council**

Agreed: John William Upton

**Mendham Borough Council**

Agreed: Melissa Rawley-Payne, Mark Vandenhende

**Mendham Township Committee**

Agreed: Amalia Duarte

**Mendham Township Board of Ed**

Agreed: Roberto Strobel

**Morris Plains Council**

Agreed: Melissa (Missy) Goyeneche, William (Bill) Houston

**Morris Township Committee**

Agreed: William "Bud" Ravitz, Siva Jonnada

**Parsippany Town Council**

Agreed: Judy Hernandez, Bernard Clarkin, Matt Kavanagh

**Rockaway Township Board of Ed:**

Agreed: Oliver Borno, Noel Anderson