

Exhibit L: How to Handle Potential Problems



What if:

—a candidate keeps talking when their time is up?

Interrupt gently, but firmly. “Excuse me, Mr./Ms. Candidate, but you have used up your time.” You can let people finish their sentences, but some people’s sentences never end. If you permit one candidate to go over his/her time, the others will never let you forget it.

—a candidate is difficult to control or unruly?

Address them directly. “Ms. Candidate, you are out of order.” “Mr. Candidate. I must remind you once again that you are not being fair to the other candidates.” If the warnings don’t work, console yourself with the thought that the evening is accomplishing its purpose: revealing the candidate’s true character!

—a member of the audience is rowdy?

Address the audience member directly. “Sir/Madam, please sit down and wait your turn.” or “Please respect the rules we have established so that we may have an orderly discussion of the issues.” Usually, your comments and growing peer pressure from the audience will do the trick. If it doesn’t, call a brief recess and speak to the disrupter personally.

—the audience gets unruly during an in-person event?

Remind the audience that this is not a rally for voters who have already made up their minds, but a nonpartisan event for those who have not. You can use such comments as: “We understand that many of you have strong feelings about this election (issue), but others have come here tonight to help them decide how to vote. Please let us use our time for discussion of the issues.” or “Please, let’s not waste time that should be spent listening to the candidates.”

Remember that the moderator has the authority to call a recess to review the ground rules with the co- sponsors and participants. The moderator also has the authority to decide that conditions just do not exist for a useful discussion of the issues and can adjourn the event.

—there is a challenge to your authority and the way you are conducting the event? Calmly restate the ground rules and proceed. (You can even read from the letter of invitation). If the challenge continues, you can call a recess and caucus with the candidates and sponsors. With careful preparation this shouldn’t happen.

—people demand to see the written questions afterwards?

Refuse them. The questions are the property of the League.