

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF HOMES AND SERVICES FOR THE AGING
Soon to be LeadingAge Florida

2012 Election

Voter Education



Candidates Forum &

Advocacy

Tool Kit

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Get the Spirit
GET INVOLVED!

If ever there was a time to get involved in the election process, it's now. The 2012 November election is shaping up to be one of the most exciting in recent history. We are living in a time when the elections can shape Florida's future for decades to come. If there was a time to get involved and let your voice be heard that time has come! The stakes in Florida are especially high. Every ten years, Florida redistricts, reshaping the political boundary lines of every state legislative and congressional district in the State to provide for equal representation. Those lines can fundamentally change a community's portrait of representation at all levels of government. According to the 2010 Census, 18.8 million people reside in Florida; we will gain two new seats in Congress-for a total 27. In addition voters will select their US Senator along with 120 State House Members and 20 State Senators.

An election year provides an opportunity for FAHSA members to familiarize their staff, residents, and clients with the candidates and where they stand on important issues. It also provides an opportunity for you to meet and educate candidates for public office about your organization. Several FAHSA members have had tremendous success in the past by introducing candidates to their organizations through Candidates Forums, "Meet the Candidates" events, small meetings of knowledgeable board members and resident leaders held with individuals running for office, and Town Hall Meetings featuring newly-elected officials. Some organize the events themselves, while others involve the League of Women Voters or member communities in the same voting district. Through pre-election activities and subsequent encounters, elected officials become sensitive to the needs of the senior housing and long-term care providers and consumers that they represent. Those who are newly elected are especially eager to hear from constituents.

In a democracy, power is in the hands of the people. The more informed people are about how government works, the more likely that they will take the time to vote. Non-partisan voter education events provide attendees with an opportunity to compare candidates, participate in the discussion of issues, and weigh the pros and cons of candidates for office.

FAHSA's "2012 Voter Education & Candidates Forum Tool Kit" contains helpful suggestions and guidelines for organizing voter education events without jeopardizing your non-profit tax exempt status. To help you get started, it also includes sample questions for candidates, an agenda, letter to candidates, and fliers announcing the forum. Please use the Tool Kit over the next few months to organize activities that will help candidates for public office develop an understanding of the services provided by senior housing and long-term care providers. Use it after the election to hold a get together with newly elected members of the Florida legislature or Congress.

(Check the [Secretary of State website](#) for a list of open and contested seats for the Florida Legislature and Congress.) *Please call on FAHSA's Public Policy Staff for the name of your state senator, representative, congressman or if you need assistance in organizing a pre- or post-election event. Seize the opportunity now to educate candidates and incumbents about your community. Involve your residents and staff in the events. Your advocacy efforts will be fun and rewarding.*

FAHSA Public Policy Staff:

Janegale Boyd, President / CEO
Tom Randle, Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs
Carol Berkowitz, Esq., Senior Director of Regulatory and Legal Affairs

Local Advocacy Leads to Success in Tallahassee & Washington

FAHSA's grassroots advocacy program has been very successful.

Several FAHSA members from various areas of the state have developed solid relationships with legislators and members of Congress by inviting them to special events, recognizing their accomplishments, serving as a reliable resource on proposed elder care legislation, and letting lawmakers know what issues are important to their elder constituents. These relationships often started when the legislator first ran for office or while the lawmaker was a freshman legislator looking for information and ideas. Many of these same lawmakers are now powerful leaders who are not as accessible as they once were, but they remember their roots and the people they met along the way. These very same legislators now sponsor our bills and help us with amendments.

Term Limits – An Opportunity to Make New Allies

Because of constitutionally mandated term limits, members of the state House and Senate are limited to serving eight years in the same elected office. Consequently, with every election cycle, we lose informed and dedicated advocates, but with term limits, we also have the opportunity to make new friends and allies. The best and most efficient way to do this is through our member organizations, most of which have a rich history of providing high-quality care and services to the community. That's what advocacy and this publication are about – providing you with the information you need to become an ambassador for FAHSA by communicating with and educating candidates and elected officials about your organization and the Association.

Election 2012

FAHSA member organizations have the opportunity to become a part of the political process by holding voter education events to educate aspiring office holders about the needs of older Floridians and the value of the services that you provide. You have the opportunity to build relationships with candidates who are running for office.

Take the time to get involved. Open your doors to candidates. Find out their views about issues that affect your organization and the people you serve. Let them know about your concerns and priorities. The effort will pay off when we need support on a bill or amendment during the 2012 Legislative Session and beyond.

This election is especially important for several reasons:

- Voters are fearful about the economy and dissatisfied with elected officials and other groups so anything can happen.
- The tea party movement has spurred more grassroots activity than in the past.
- Turnover in the Florida Legislature is expected to be higher than usual because of redistricting and the continued negative public sentiment toward incumbents. The same could occur with Florida's congressional delegation.
- Seven proposed Constitutional Amendments will be on the ballot.



Dates to Remember for the 2012 Election

- **Presidential Preference Primary: January 31, 2012**
- **Primary Election: August 14, 2012**
- **General Election: November 6, 2012**
- **Last Day to Declare as a Candidate: June 8, 2012**

(You must be registered at least 29 days before you can vote in an election.)



PART I

***VOTER
EDUCATION***



Three Good Reasons to Get Involved in Voter Education and Grassroots Advocacy

1. FAHSA Members Have Significant Voting Power

More than three million Floridians are age 60 or older. They vote in much higher proportions than any other age group. Older persons comprise as much as 40-50% of the actual voters in many elections. Some FAHSA member homes are polling sites, making it especially convenient for residents and staff to vote. Others provide transportation to the polls and assist residents and clients with obtaining absentee ballots. Consequently, the voting power of FAHSA member organizations is substantial.

2. Policy Decisions of Florida Legislators and Members of Congress Routinely Affect FAHSA Member Communities

- √ Nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and retirement communities are among the most heavily regulated providers in Florida. Home and community-based services are also becoming more regulated. Regulations affect the cost of care.
- √ HUD housing for the elderly, though federally funded, is affected by state laws related to fire safety, special municipal assessments, landlord-tenant issues, funding for affordable housing, and the regulation of apartment complexes.
- √ The Florida Legislature passes all laws affecting the tax status of non-profit organizations, including sales tax and ad valorem property tax exemptions and exclusions. Positions taken on this one issue could have a lasting impact on the financial viability of many FAHSA member organizations.
- √ Each year, the Florida Legislature passes a budget that dictates how state revenues will be spent. Each of us is affected by legislative decisions pertaining to cuts or increases in the budget and dozens of changes proposed each year to laws affecting long-term care, retirement housing, and taxation.
- √ Funding and regulatory decisions made by Congress often affect FAHSA member organizations. The Florida congressional delegation helps influence these decisions.

3. You Make a Difference

Many people believe Tallahassee and Washington are too far removed, both geographically and politically, for their voice to be heard. It's important to remember that elected officials want to hear from their constituents. They need YOUR SUPPORT to be reelected. In this day of single-member districts, you are more important to your legislators than ever before. FAHSA and LeadingAge can present a statewide or national perspective, but the real power comes from informed discussions at the grassroots level with respected members of the community. The bottom line is that legislators are interested in knowing how public policy and the budget affect their constituents -- the people back home who elected them to office.

Voter Education & the Tax Exempt Status of Non-profit Organizations

Most FAHSA members are non-profit organizations subject to provisions of the Internal Revenue Code governing political activity. Through both the Federal Tax Code and Federal Elections Commission's statutes and regulations, the government has established specific guidelines that must be followed by non-profit organizations.

Under provisions of federal law, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization may conduct non-partisan voter service activities without jeopardizing its tax-exempt status. **However, the manner in which a political activity is conducted is very important and should be given careful attention.**

- All political activity conducted by non-profit organizations must be non-partisan in nature. Non-partisan means that you cannot undertake any activities that support or advertise your support for a particular political candidate or party.
- Every aspect of your voter registration, education, and election assistance efforts should be able to withstand tough scrutiny for equity and freedom from partisan political overtones.
- Non-profit organizations are prohibited from working for the election of a political candidate--federal, state, or local. Individuals employed by the non-profit organizations who do volunteer work for a candidate should do so on their own time, making it clear that their political activity is personal and not endorsed by their employer.
- Non-profit organizations may not distribute any literature, make statements, or show preferences for or in opposition to any political candidate or party.
- Non-profit organizations are permitted to educate their constituencies in a non-partisan fashion about the various issues, legislation, and political candidates during the campaign season, including conducting candidates forums and providing a display table with literature made available by candidates. **Every candidate does not have to participate, but the invitation to speak or display literature should be extended to everyone running for an office.**
- Two rules of thumb should prevail: whatever the voter service activity, treat all candidates for the same office alike, and emphasize your facility's non-partisanship in any publication or meeting that is voter education or advocacy related.
- If your Representative or Senator is running for reelection, do not invite him or her to an event during the campaign unless you offer the opponent the same opportunity. If the opponent does not respond or chooses not to attend, it's fine to conduct the event with only the incumbent present.

Voter Education Activities

To be an informed voter, one must be educated about the candidates and their positions on issues. A number of educational activities can be planned and held by your organization to increase public awareness about the candidates. Voter education programs can be exciting community-wide events planned and executed by residents or clients, staff, volunteers, and other interested parties or small meetings held with candidates, resident leaders, and administrative staff.

As you plan voter education activities, remember that an elected official's constituency extends far beyond your residents or clients. It includes the families of residents and clients, employees, trustees, volunteers, and community members -- virtually anyone who comes in contact with your organization. Consider including these constituents in voter education activities you sponsor. **Always remember--turnout will be better if residents help organize and promote the event.**

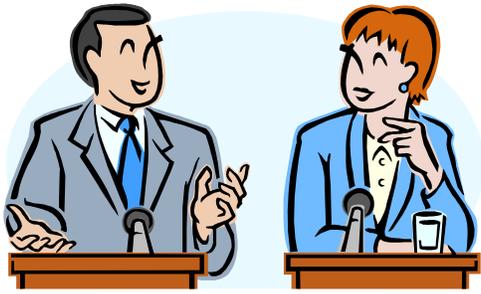
It also is important that elected officials and the general public are aware of ongoing involvement of your community in the electoral process. Contact the media to cover your voters' service activities. Write articles for your newsletter and mail them to your elected officials or candidates who attend events sponsored by your organization before or after the election. **Most importantly, please remember to keep FAHSA informed of any grassroots advocacy activities you undertake.**

Suggested Activities for Voter Education

1. ***Candidates Forums*** - Candidates for the Florida Legislature, in particular, should be invited to a structured question and answer session. Be sure to schedule the meeting at a time when good participation is assured. A poor turnout sends a message that residents, staff, volunteers, etc., don't care. Brief your residents, staff, and other invited guests on the format of the meeting and the importance of attendance. A committee composed of residents and staff should be organized to plan and coordinate the event. The more people committed to its success, the better the turnout. Consider co-sponsoring the event with other organizations and health and social service providers in your community to ensure good attendance; e.g., retirement housing, eldercare organizations or long-term care facilities in the same voting district, area agencies on aging, and senior centers.
2. ***Open House*** - If a candidates forum is more than you want to tackle, consider inviting candidates to a "meet and greet" breakfast or an informal afternoon or evening social that includes residents and clients, families, volunteers, and trustees. Do the same at least annually with members of the Legislature and Congress who represent your organization. This could be done in conjunction with an already-scheduled event (such as a board meeting) or staged on its own. Candidates and elected officials could also be asked to address a luncheon with your residents' council and key staff. If an incumbent is running uncontested, use the event to reacquaint him/her with your community.
3. ***Facility Tour*** - Invite candidates and elected officials who are unfamiliar with your organization to tour your facility to acquaint them with your mission and the services provided to residents and the community-at-large. A tour could be a stand-alone event or done in conjunction with an open house or candidates forum. Organize a walking tour with different employees and resident leaders/consumers available to explain the various components of your organization (i.e., activities, meal programs, therapies, etc.). Use the tour to introduce the candidate to department heads, resident/consumer leaders and the chair of your board.
4. ***Voter Guides*** - Newspapers and community organizations, including the AARP, sometimes compile guides to help voters understand the issues and candidates' views. Find out who is publishing the guide and secure copies for your residents. Start by contacting your local AARP and the League of Women Voters.

5. *Literature Tables* - Most candidates publish brochures and other literature concerning their candidacy, past voting record, etc. Request ample supplies of these brochures from all candidates and place them on a table designed and decorated specifically for that purpose. Be sure to document that all candidates for the same office were asked to supply brochures.

Remember - Successful events are dependent on resident involvement & support!



“Politics should be the part-time profession of every citizen.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Candidates Forums -- Tips for Organizers

The purpose of a Candidates Forum is to determine which candidates for public office are sensitive to and sympathetic with issues that affect your organization and the community in which you live. Therefore, it is important to establish a friendly, non-threatening, impartial atmosphere that will encourage candidates to openly express their positions and opinions on issues.

- Be sure to invite all candidates running for the same office to participate in the forum. A candidate may decline or not respond to an invitation to appear at a forum. If this occurs, you have fulfilled your non-partisan legal obligation by extending the invitation. Because of time constraints, you may choose only to invite candidates for the Florida House of Representatives and Senate for the voting district in which your organization is located. (Call your supervisor of elections or the FAHSA office for a list of candidates in your facility’s voting districts. Check the voter registration card of a resident to determine the Congressional, Senate and House districts for which your residents are eligible to vote. Legislative districts are also identified in the FAHSA Directory of Members next to the name of each FAHSA member organization.)
- Questions or topics may be provided to candidates in writing in advance of the forum or candidates may be asked to respond spontaneously to questions. There are advantages and disadvantages to both.
- All candidates should be given the opportunity and equal time to respond to each question. A one to two minute introduction, 90 seconds per question, and a two-to-three-minute closing statement has worked well in previously-held forums. The number of candidates and questions need to be taken into consideration when determining the time allotted for responses. If possible, leave time for a few questions from the audience.
- An impartial moderator and a timekeeper should be selected to keep speakers on task. Consider using a flag or a bell to alert candidates when they have 10 seconds remaining to complete their response.
- The order in which candidates respond to individual questions should be rotated so that no one candidate has a competitive advantage.
- Attendees should be encouraged to be courteous and non-partisan when asking questions of candidates. Any one of the candidates could be elected to office.
- Residents/consumers are more likely to attend a forum if they feel a sense of ownership in the event. Involve them in the planning process, including contacting candidates, preparing forum questions, and advertising the event.



Essential Elements of a Successful Candidates Forum

- ☆ Involve residents or clients in planning and promoting the event. If planning the event is fun, the enthusiasm will spread and turnout will be good.
- ☆ Communicate with candidates or elected officials and their designated aides well in advance and immediately before a scheduled event.
- ☆ Select a date and time that does not conflict with another event or popular activity.
- ☆ Create a festive environment. Decorate the room with the U.S. and State of Florida flags or red, white and blue ribbons. Ask attendees to wear the same colors. Play patriotic music as people enter the room.
- ☆ Prepare three to five prepared questions on pertinent issues, preferably to be provided to all candidates in advance of the event.
- ☆ Promote the event within and outside your organization. A crowd is important.
- ☆ Select a confident, impartial moderator and timekeeper.
- ☆ Serve refreshments for a meet and greet with candidates after the event.
- ☆ Recognize event organizers/promoters.
- ☆ Express appreciation to candidates and other dignitaries.

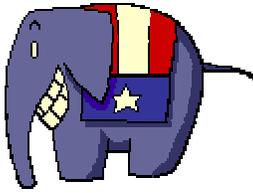
Note: The same elements apply to a town meeting or other large meetings with elected officials.



Candidates Forums -- More DOs & DON'Ts

-  **DO** designate a capable staff person to organize and plan the forum with residents/consumers.
-  **DO** set an attendance goal and assign a subcommittee of residents/consumers to promote the forum.
-  **DON'T** select a time that conflicts with other scheduled events that would detract from attendance.
-  **DO** limit the time for the forum to be no more than an hour with a 30-minute reception following.
-  **DO** advertise that refreshments will be available when you promote the event.
-  **DO** send a personal invitation to each candidate for any offices you want represented. Follow up with a personal call.
-  **DO** limit the offices for which you would like to draw candidate participation. For example, if the event is held before the primary, there may be several candidates running for the same House seat and another six or seven candidates running for a Senate seat. In this instance, you could also wait until after the primary to hold the forum. Otherwise, the event could last for hours.
-  **DO** give invited candidates/guests sufficient advance notice of the forum. Schedules are hectic prior to an election, so advance notice is important.
-  **DO** send out a press release before and after the event to get media coverage in a local newspaper.
-  **DO** tell candidates in advance if the press has been invited to attend.
-  **DO** delegate residents and staff to greet candidates and other invited guests.
-  **DO** use name cards and color-coded nametags to identify candidates.
-  **DO** encourage attendees to use nametags.
-  **DO** designate someone with parliamentary skills who will be impartial and fair to chair the forum.
-  **DO** emphasize to residents, the moderator, and the audience that the forum is a non-partisan voter education event.
-  **DON'T** depend on questions from the audience. Ask the planning committee to prepare at least three questions as a point of departure for the forum, or solicit questions in advance from residents.
-  **DON'T** let questions from the audience get out of hand. If the planning committee opts to take audience questions, the chair should be prepared to politely discourage rude or partisan comments.
-  **DO** take photographs for your newsletter, local newspapers, and the FAHSA *LINK*.
-  **DO** write a newsletter article about the event. Send a copy of all publicity to candidates who participate.

Voter Registration



The Citizen's Job: Register, Then Vote!

Since many residents of long-term care and retirement housing communities previously moved from another county, they may not qualify to vote without re-registering. Consider reminding residents and clients, especially those from outside of your community's voting district, that they may need to re-register to vote. Offer information on how to register. Voter registration may be done in person at your county supervisor of elections office or through mail registration forms. Registration forms are available on the Division of Elections website, which can be accessed at: <http://election.dos.state.fl.us>

You must re-register to vote if:

- ★ You have not voted during the preceding two years and have not completed a form sent to you by the supervisor of elections to request that your registration records be updated.
- ★ You have changed party affiliation.
- ★ You have moved out of the election district in which you previously voted.

How to register: Fill out a voter registration application form at the Supervisor of Elections office, the driver's license office, any public library or via the Internet at: <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/pdf/webappform.pdf>

Please remember that nursing homes are expected to assist residents in exercising their right to vote. Helping residents to register to vote is part of the process.

ALL VOTER REGISTRATION SERVICES MUST BE NON-PARTISAN

- Q.** Can my organization work with other groups that conduct voter registration, education and get-out-the-vote programs?
A. Yes, if the effort is non-partisan. Participating organizations and individuals cannot make any statements in support of or in opposition to any particular candidate or party, or carry on any other activity designed to reflect a preference or recommendation for any political candidate or party.
- Q.** Can vehicles owned by non-profit organizations be used to transport voters to the polls? Can drivers employed by the organization transport voters to the polls?
A. Yes to both questions.
- Q.** Can my organization place posters in our building encouraging residents to vote in conspicuous places?
A. Yes, as long as the posters do not refer to political parties or an individual candidate.

Early Voting

The 2005 Legislature passed legislation which standardized early voting throughout the state. Early voting is defined as "casting a ballot prior to Election Day at a location designated by the supervisor of elections and depositing the voted ballot in the tabulation system."

According to the Department of State website; "Early voting begins 10 days before an election and ends on the 3rd day before any election in which there is a state or federal office race. Early voting may be held for a maximum of 12 hours, but no less than 6 hours, a day. The hours for each day for each early voting site during that period are set at the Supervisor's discretion. Supervisors of Elections designate early voting sites 30 days prior to an election. Early voting is held in the main or branch office of the Supervisor of Elections. Supervisors may also designate any city hall or public library geographically located so that all voters in the county will have an equal opportunity to cast a vote. Please contact your Supervisor of Elections for dates, times and location."

Voters who want to vote early should remember to bring a photo and signature identification with them.

Contact your [supervisor of elections](#) for locations, dates and times of early voting.



Absentee Voting



- ☆ Absentee ballots must be returned to the supervisor of elections by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. If the ballot is returned by mail, adequate time must be available for the ballot to be received and submitted by this deadline.
- ☆ Individuals who are physically disabled or infirm and unable to vote at a polling place, or who will be out of town on Election Day, may vote by absentee ballot.
- ☆ Requests for an absentee ballot should be made to the supervisor of elections for the county in which the voter is registered and resides. Such requests may be made in person, by mail, or by telephone by the person wishing to vote in absentia or by an individual designated to act in his/her behalf.
- ☆ In order for someone other than the voter to pick up a ballot, a signed release must be given which includes the voter's name, registration number, and date of birth. The registered voter seeking the absentee ballot may indicate that he/she wishes to receive an absentee ballot for all elections which are held within the calendar year.
- ☆ Long-term care and senior housing communities should contact their supervisor of elections to determine what types of help and supervision are available to ensure that absentee ballots are appropriately witnessed and handled correctly.

“People acting together as a group can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring about.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt

PART II

***POLITICAL
ADVOCACY***



Tips for Grassroots Advocacy

- **Lobbying can be frustrating - get used to it!** Citizen advocacy (lobbying) is a frustrating business. Being right is no guarantee of winning. Especially frustrating is the fact that battles that seem to be won sometimes are not. For example, action on a bill FAHSA opposes may be postponed several times because of our opposition, but the bill may appear unexpectedly on the agenda for the last scheduled meeting of a key committee and pass. Conversely, a bill FAHSA supports may pass the Legislature only to be vetoed by the Governor. The bottom line is – do not get discouraged if at first things do not go your way.
- **Don't be intimidated.** Some people think that politicians are out of the reach of ordinary people. On the contrary, they are generally quite approachable. Remember, their profession is listening to citizens and making policy decisions based on the balance of what they hear. Most lawmakers are glad to hear from their constituents - and those who are not, usually won't be in their positions very long.
- **Keep in touch with legislators year-round.** The best grassroots lobbying often occurs when the Legislature is not in session. At these times, lawmakers have more time to listen to members and perhaps have a little more perspective on what is important to the state and its citizens. Between sessions, they have more time to get to know your organization, residents, and staff. It's a good time to invite legislators to speak to your staff and residents when they are not in session – anytime between mid-May and the end of February. The summer and fall are best. Once committee meetings start, lawmakers are less available. When appropriate, send notes of praise and encouragement to legislators, both directly and publicly through the local media.
- **Don't expect to win every time.** Nobody wins all the time in politics. It is an ongoing, never-ending process that allows some wins and some losses for most groups from time to time. When you lose, learn from it. What could you have done differently? What seemed to work for the opposing side? Above all, do not take defeat personally. There are many forces at work in the policy-making process, and you can't blame yourself, or any other single person, for your defeat. Lose graciously and come back stronger next time.
- **It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.** While you, FAHSA, and LeadingAge have important policy goals, remember that the process is a long and difficult one. On any given bill, amendment, or vote, it may often be better to work hard and act cleanly and professionally than to win what might be a short-lived victory. A group that gets a reputation for being untruthful, inflexible, and unable to see the perspective of other players in the process will not be able to maintain an effective and permanent voice in the policy-making process.

Source: Life Services Network of Illinois. *Lobbying the Illinois General Assembly.*

Finding Out Who Your Elected Officials Are

Call your county supervisor of elections or look at your voter registration card to determine which legislators or candidates represent your organization or you personally. Another option is to check the FAHSA Membership Directory next to the name of your facility. It lists the state house and senate district in which your organization is located. Legislative contact information can be found in the directory under the tab labeled "Legislative Section." To view candidates for your state house and senate district online, please go to LeadingAge's CapWiz site at: <http://capwiz.com/leadingage/home/> (the system will prompt you to enter your address to see those candidates specific to your district).

PART III

SAMPLE LETTERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Candidates Forum
Invitation to Candidates - Sample A**



LETTERHEAD

Candidate's name

Candidate's address

Candidate's city, state, zip

Dear _____ :

You are invited to a ***Candidates Forum*** sponsored by *name of organization* for candidates for State House of Representatives District __ seat. Refreshments will be served after the forum, at which time candidates will have an opportunity to socialize with attendees.

Describe your organization is a continuing care retirement community. Over 250 residents live in apartments on our campus, another 96 reside in assisted living, and 126 live in our nursing home. We employ _____ people and enjoy the support of another _____ volunteers.

As non-profit organizations, we may not endorse a candidate for office. The purpose of the forum is to educate our staff and residents about the candidates who are seeking this position. We anticipate a large crowd (about 100 people) because of the interest that our residents and staff have shown in previous voter education events.

Date:

Time:

Location:

Please RSVP to (name, phone number and email address) by (date).

Questions for the forum are attached. If time permits, the audience will also have an opportunity to ask questions.

We look forward to your participation in this exciting event.

Sincerely,

**Candidates Forum
Invitation to Candidates - Sample B**

[Insert Name]
[Insert Organization]
[Insert street Address]
[Insert City, State, Zip]

[Insert Date]

[Insert Name]
[Insert Office Address]
[Insert City, State, Zip]

Dear [Insert Name]:

I would like to extend an invitation to you to a candidate forum at xxx. Xx provides xx services to xx older adults. We also employ xx people and have nearly xx volunteers from the community.

During the visit, you will have the opportunity to tour our organization, meet with our clients and staff members and learn what issues matter to them. I am confident that by seeing our organization's work in action, you will understand the important role you can play in helping us offer older adults the highest quality of life.

I hope that you will be able to accept our invitation to participate. I will call your office regarding the details of this event. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Insert Your Name]
[Insert Your Position]
[Insert Your Organization's Name]

Candidates Forum Sample Questions for Candidates - 2010

The questions that follow are a sample for you and your residents to use as a guide when organizing a candidates forum or other voter education events. Resident/client leaders should be involved in finalizing the questions that are asked. You may give the questions to candidates in advance of the forum by including them with the invitation to attend the event. If you want more spontaneous responses, allow time for a few questions from the audience.

- Please introduce yourself and tell us why you think you are qualified for the position you are seeking. (two minutes per candidate)
- If elected, what would be your top three priorities and why? (one minute per candidate)
- What role should state government have in responding to the needs of Florida's growing number of seniors over the age of 75? (one minute per candidate)
- State economists are predicting another two difficult years for Florida. What do you think the Florida Legislature should do if they are faced with another possible budget deficit when the Legislature meets in 2011? (one minute per candidate)
- A few years ago because of the economy, the Florida Legislature passed a Nursing Home Quality Assessment, a per bed fee that is paid by nursing homes and used to draw down additional federal Medicaid dollars that so far have gone back into the nursing home budget. Nursing homes that are part of the state's 70 continuing care communities are exempt from paying the assessment. At least one state is considering eliminating the exemption for continuing care communities because of the economy. What is your position on this issue? (one minute per candidate)
- What would you do as a legislator to make sure that the bills you are asked to vote on that contain regulatory changes that are intended to protect the elderly do not make care and services less affordable to elder consumers and their families? (one minute per candidate)
- Questions from the audience (one minute per candidate per question)
- Closing statement from each candidate (two minutes per candidate)
- What do you think the legislature should do, if anything, to help preserve older affordable housing properties for the elderly that were financed by HUD and now need money to renovate or make emergency repairs?

Note: Depending on the number of candidates who attend, you may want to adjust the response time for each question so the event does not last more than one hour. Depending on the type of organization sponsoring the event, not all of the sample questions may be relevant to attendees. If time is allotted for questions from the audience, you only need two or three prepared questions.

Candidates Forum Sample Agenda

Welcome	Two minutes
Introduction of Moderator(s) Timekeeper	One minute
Opening Remarks by Candidates	Two minutes for each candidate (1 minute if time is limited)
Pre-Distributed Questions (Mailed to candidates before the Forum)	Four questions, 60 to 90 seconds each
Questions from the Audience (Submitted on index cards or take questions directly from interested parties)	10 minutes (one minute for each candidate's response)
Closing Comments by Candidates	Two minutes each (one minute if time is an issue)
Closing by Moderator	One minute

***You are cordially invited to a
Meet and Greet the Candidates Reception
immediately following the forum.***

**Candidates Forum
Announcement - Sample A**



(NAME OF FACILITY)

presents . . .

MEET THE CANDIDATES FORUM

Local Candidates Invited to Discuss Issues and
Participate in Question & Answer Forum

- * State Senate District ____
- * State House of Representatives District ____

WHERE DO CANDIDATES STAND ON ISSUES AFFECTING YOU?

Candidates have been asked to state their position on:

- The economy and declining state revenues
- Regulation of elder care programs
- Their top priorities if elected to office

Date:

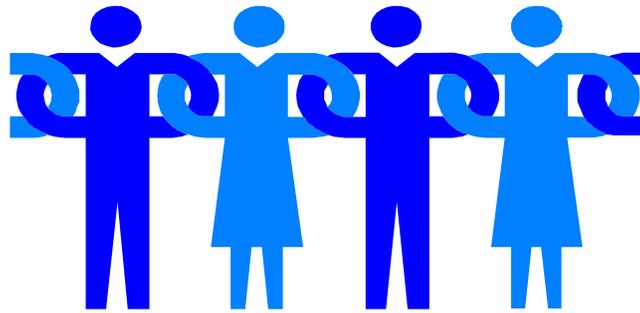
Time:

RSVP By:

REFRESHMENTS will be served immediately after the forum. Bring a friend! Candidates need to know that people who live or work in retirement housing and long-term care communities are interested in issues that affect them.

Note: Provide directions to facility if appropriate. Names of candidates may also be included on flyer.

You are Invited to a Candidates Forum



GET THE SPIRIT
GET INVOLVED
ELECTION (insert election year)



(Name of Facility) & (Name of Facility)
are sponsoring a Candidates Forum. All
candidates running for the State Legislature
for our voting district have been invited to attend.
This is your chance to find out what the
candidates stand for!



WHERE? (Room Name)

WHEN? (Day of the Week, Date, and Time)

RSVP By:

REFRESHMENTS will be served. Bring a friend! Candidates need to know that people who live or work in retirement housing are interested in issues that affect their community.

(Include directions to meeting site when appropriate.)

letterhead

Save the Date: Candidates Forum

To: Candidates for Florida House Seat X & Senate Seat X

XXX is planning a Candidates Forum and reception after the Primary Election. Please reserve the date in the event that you are one of the final candidates for Senate seat X or House seat X. An agenda and candidate questions will be sent to participants in advance of the event.

If you are not familiar with our organization, XXX is home to XXX seniors who live in independent living and another XXX who reside in our nursing home and assisted living facility. As a non-profit organization, we cannot endorse a candidate, but we are permitted to hold non-partisan candidate events. We anticipate that over XXX residents will attend the forum.

Date:

Time:

Location:

Contact Person:

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Best of luck in your campaign.

Sincerely,

XXX
Executive Director



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

_____ is hosting a Legislative Town Hall Meeting for _____
County members of the Florida Association of Homes and Services for the
Aging and friends. Distinguished guests include:

State Senator (Name)
State Representative (Name)

The meeting will give administrative staff and resident leaders the
opportunity to discuss their concerns with legislators who represent our
interests in Tallahassee.

Don't miss this important event. Let's show our _____ Legislative
Delegation that FAHSA, FLiCRA and Resident Councils of (city or county
name) are an interested and vocal constituency.

Date: (day of week), (month, date, and year)

Time: 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. -- (Room Name)
(Refreshments will be served after the meeting)

Place: Host Organization's Name
Address

RSVP: (Administrator's Name)
(Phone)
by (month, date, and year)

Please bring five resident leaders and key staff.
A good turnout to this event is very important.



2012 ELECTION

MEET THE CANDIDATES -- FIND OUT WHAT THEY STAND FOR !

Candidates for Florida Senate District _____ (identify candidates by name) have been invited to our Thursday morning coffee meeting. You will have the opportunity to speak directly to candidates and voice your opinions about important issues affecting (city name) residents, particularly retirees. Candidates have been asked to introduce themselves and summarize their goals if elected to office.

During the 2012 Legislative Session, legislators are likely to be faced with a budget deficit of about \$2.5 billion. Therefore, sales tax reform (including the possible repeal of some current exemptions that benefit our organization and other non-profit groups), could become an issue. Since the state budget affects our organizations and you as residents, it is important that we have a dialogue with our elected officials and those running for office. Legislators are more likely to respond to our comments if they know who we are.

Please attend the coffee. A good turnout is important.

Date: (day of the week, month, date, year)

Time:

Place: (address)

RSVP: (phone number)



*Name of organization and the
Florida Association of Homes and Services for the Aging*

Cordially Invites You to a Luncheon

in Honor of

State Representative

(Name)

*For his ongoing dedication and support
of good public policy for elder Floridians*

(day of week, month, date, and year)

Noon to 2 p.m.

On the campus of
(Community Name and Address)

R.S.V.P.: (insert your phone number)

**Candidates Forum
Sample Thank You Letter**

Date:

Dear _____:

Thanks for taking time to participate in the *date* Candidates Forum sponsored by *name of organization*. We were pleased that all six candidates for House seat __ were represented and that you chose to participate. Although we are still evaluating the effectiveness of the forum, the general reaction from the audience was positive. We hope you feel the same since our goal was to give each of the candidates the opportunity to share their vision with a group of voters who are interested in the upcoming election.

We look forward to working with you in the future and wish you well in your campaign.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

(Your title)

Grassroots Advocacy Reporting Form for Candidate/Legislator Events

Instructions: Please complete this form for every voter service or advocacy event sponsored by your organization and return it to: Tom Randle, FAHSA, 1812 Riggins Rd., Tallahassee, FL 32308 or FAX to 850-671-3790. It will be very helpful in our future work with the Legislature. Thank you!

NAME OF ORGANIZATION: _____

NAME OF RESPONDENT: _____

1. Please indicate the type of voter service or advocacy event sponsored or co-sponsored by your facility:
 a. candidates forum
 b. meet and greet for candidates/legislators
 c. facility tour provided to one or more candidates
 d. appreciation reception for legislators
 e. other (please specify): _____

2. Please list the names of candidates for public office or current legislators invited to the event and indicate with an asterisk (*) those who attended:
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____

3. Date of the event: _____

4. Was the event co-sponsored with another facility or organization? Yes No
If yes, please identify: _____

5. Number of guests in attendance, i.e., residents, family, staff, etc.: _____

6. Was the public invited? Yes No

7. Issues or topics that were discussed with candidates/legislators:
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
d. _____

Comments: _____

Thank you!