

**The Portuguese-American Forum of Santa Clara**  
 is non-partisan grass roots committee, that seeks to encourage  
 our local Portuguese-American Community toward informed  
 involvement in the electoral process.

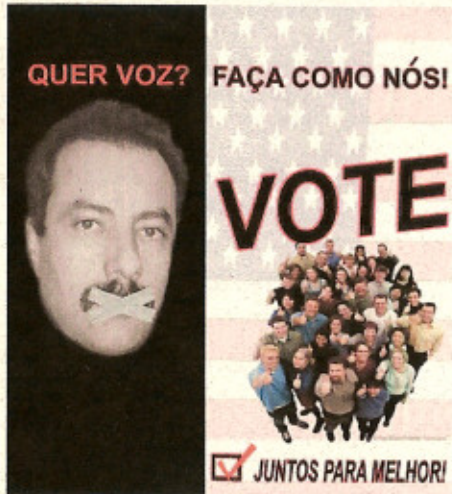
The Committee does not endorse candidates, our mission is to  
 ensure that the audience receives information objectively and  
 without bias.

**THE PORTUGUESE AMERICAN FORUM OF SANTA CLARA  
 SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS**

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| ★ S.E.S Corporation                              | ★ Santa Clara Sporting Club                    |
| ★ Supreme Council of S.E.S                       | ★ Sociedade Filarmónica União P. de Sta. Clara |
| ★ Irmandade de Santo António                     | ★ Conselho Paróquial Português (Saint Clare)   |
| ★ Sociedade de N. S. de Fátima                   | ★ Club Sport Marítimo                          |
| ★ The Portuguese-American<br>Citizenship Project | ★ Fundação Luso Americana                      |

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

João Arruda, Deodato Constantino, Manuel de Oliveira,  
 José Agnelo de Oliveira, Manuel Madruga,  
 Pedro Ricardo e Maria Fernanda Ricardo (*Coordinator*)



**Points of Contact**

Communities, clubs and organizations  
 wishing to inquire about conducting  
 a Candidates' Night forum are invited  
 to contact the following individual;

Maria Fernanda Ricardo  
 (*Forum Coordinator*)  
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Created by: Fernando Brasil and Elizabeth Ricardo of The  
 Portuguese-American Forum of Santa Clara, California.

Sponsored by: The Luso-American Foundation  
 The Portuguese-American Citizens Project

**The Portuguese American Forum**



**of Santa Clara**

CALIFORNIA

**Tips for Planning  
 and Conducting  
 Candidate Forums**



**O seu voto é a sua voz!**



Candidates' Night in Santa Clara, CA

*A candidate forum can be an excellent format for educating voters about the candidates; however, it requires careful planning*

### Non-partisanship

Like all 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations civic responsibility activities, candidate forums must be scrupulously non-partisan. Some guidelines should be followed:

Invite all candidates and treat them alike. This includes invitation and follow-up, the information you provide in advance, the questions they are asked, and the opportunities they have to respond.

Do not intervene, directly or indirectly, in the campaign on behalf of a particular candidate or party. Nothing you do at the forum can show preference for one candidate over another. Your moderator must also be unbiased.

Cover a broad range of issues. Focusing on one issue will create the appearance of endorsing some candidates over others. A broader focus will more effectively educate voters, and will avoid any appearance of bias.

### Planning

Careful advance planning will ensure the success of your candidate forum. Remember that candidates are campaigning to get elected. To accept your invitation to appear at a forum, they must feel that the event is worthwhile and that they will be able to address a significant number of people. Therefore, plan carefully and do not promise more than you can deliver. You will want to consider the following factors:

### Turnout Strategy:

1. *Timing*—Start planning well in advance, so that you are able to choose the best time for your forum, and avoid conflicts with other community events.
2. *Target Audience*—A candidate forum with a small audience will do your credibility more harm than good. Be realistic about your ability to bring out a crowd, so you don't promise more than you can deliver.
3. *Mobilizing Networks*—What networks you can mobilize in your community? Consider broadening your sponsorship to increase attendance and create wider ownership. If sponsored by several groups or organizations, can they also bring people?
4. *Reminders*—Mail postcards to registered voters in your area of upcoming elections.

### The Candidates & The Forum:

1. *Focus*—Will you invite candidates for local, state, or national office? While you may want to invite a combination, consider whether you'll have enough time for a thoughtful discussion on two or more sets of issues. Candidates for local office will be more likely to accept your invitation than state-wide or national candidates.
2. *Site*—Choose a centrally located site that is easy to get to. The site should also be an appropriate size for the number of people you expect; for example, an auditorium that is too large will make your crowd appear smaller than it is. Make sure the site has appropriate sound equipment, lighting, and parking.
3. *Format*—The format of your candidate forum will play a significant role in ensuring that it remains non-partisan. Several points are important to remember:

- Give all candidates equal treatment. Use an unbiased means to determine speaking order (e.g., drawing, alphabetical order) and give each speaker the same amount of time. Designate a timekeeper who will signal the speaker when their time is up. Be clear about time limits with the candidates before the event starts, and stick strictly to the limits, so no one gets shortchanged.
- Cover a wide range of issues in your questions. Choose a moderator who will ask the questions and ensure they use the same wording for each candidate. If you want to take questions from the audience, give people index cards to write them on, so their questions can be screened before they are asked.
- Do not allow candidates to distribute campaign literature during the forum. Let them know ahead of time if you will provide a table at the back where all campaign literature can be displayed.

4. *Invitations*—Begin by sending a letter to each candidate. Provide date, time, location and outline of the format. Place a reminder call a day or two before the forum.
5. *Leaders*—Identify leaders for several roles, including moderator, timekeeper, greeters (for the candidates and others), and publicity coordinators.
6. *Media Coverage*—The best media strategy will target both your church newsletter and the local radio. Personally contact your newspaper editor about running an announcement of the forum in advance, and suggest sending a reporter to the event..