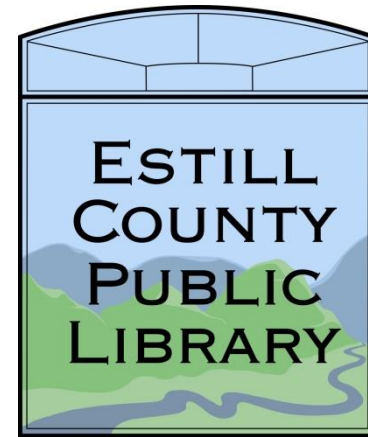


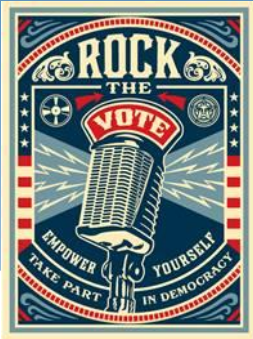
# Almost Painless Politics

(or How to Conduct a Civil Candidate Forum)

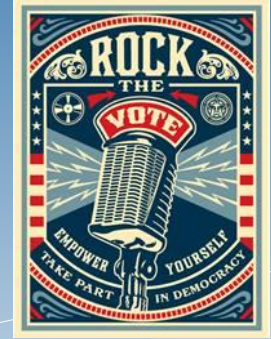
**Kathy Watson**  
**Estill County Public Library**  
**Irvine, Kentucky**

**[estillcolibrary@gmail.com](mailto:estillcolibrary@gmail.com)**

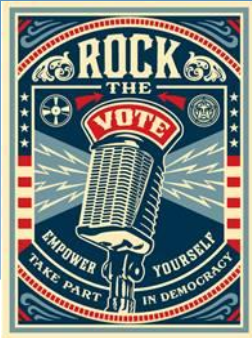




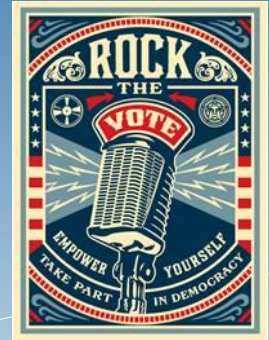
# Background



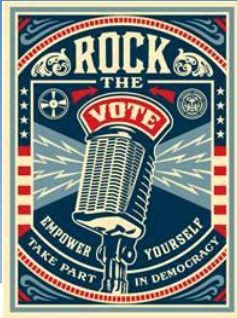
- \* In 2018, Estill County had more than 70 local candidates on the May Primary ballot.
- \* The only local office that was uncontested was that of PVA.
- \* ALL other city and county officials were either retiring or had opponents for their offices.



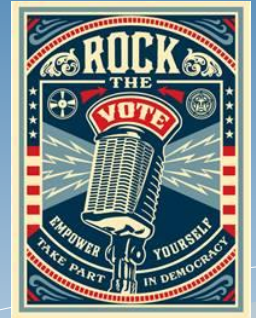
# Focus on the Purpose



- \* To encourage voters to make more informed choices during the primary election
- \* To provide an opportunity for candidates to outline ***their own*** credentials and platforms without being negative about opponents or opposing parties.



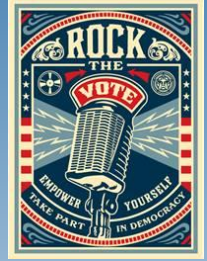
# Refine the Focus



- \* We found that one forum would not be sufficient, and that the library could not do it alone.
- \* We began looking for community partners to provide input and assistance in planning and conducting a series of forums.
- \* Here's what worked for us.



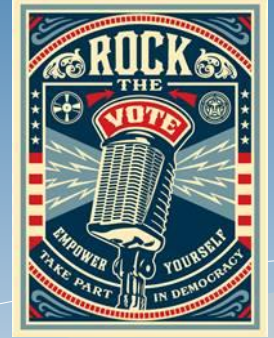
# Potential Planning Partners



- \* We reached out to local political party affiliates for their input
- \* We contacted local news media/outlets about partnering with us
- \* We researched organizers of past forums/political events in order to tap into their knowledge
- \* We contacted movers and shakers in civic groups and organizations and invited them to plan with us
- \* We invited outspoken advocates for civic engagement to be a part of the planning as well



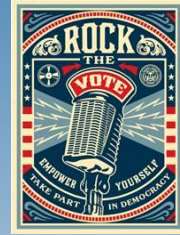
# Our Planning Timeline



- \* Plan initial meeting at least 3 months out
  - \* Contact County Clerk to get complete list of all candidates and their contact information
  - \* Contact and invite potential partners to initial meeting at local restaurant (including all local news media)
  - \* Before leaving, share contact info with all committed partners and begin delegating responsibilities for securing a forum host location, emcees, moderators, etc.
  - \* Schedule subsequent planning meetings
  - \* Begin making personal contact with candidates to make them aware of the upcoming forums and to encourage participation



# Start With Publicity



- \* Press Release
- \* Local Candidate Forums to Be Held
- \*
- \* The Estill County Public Library and Estill Action Group will be sponsoring a series of candidate forums at the Estill County High School auditorium beginning on March 8, 2018, and running through May 10. All local candidates who are on the ballot for the May Primary are invited and encouraged to participate, and all voters are urged to attend. The forums will allow each candidate to briefly discuss his or her platform and to answer questions submitted by voters. Each candidate will be contacted with guidelines for participation.
- \* The candidate forums are being organized in partnership with Estill County Schools, The Citizen Voice & Times, The Estill Tribune, WIRV/WCYO/WBON, and WSKV.
- \* For more information, please call 606-723-3030 or email the library at [estillcolibrary@gmail.com](mailto:estillcolibrary@gmail.com).



# Estill County Candidate Forums



## Save ★ The ★ Dates!

Thursday, March 22nd - County Judge Executive

Thursday, March 29th - Sheriff

Thursday, April 12th - County and Circuit Clerks

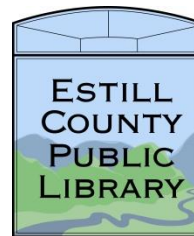
Thursday, April 26th - Magistrates

Thursday, May 3rd - Mayor, Constable, and Jailer

**6pm to 8pm at the Estill County High School Auditorium  
Free and Open to the Public**

**Meet YOUR candidates  
& Vote for YOUR future!**

For more information, contact  
Kathy Watson at  
[EstillCoLibrary@gmail.com](mailto:EstillCoLibrary@gmail.com)



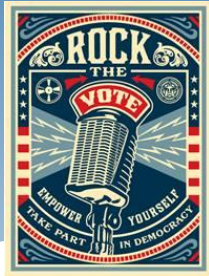
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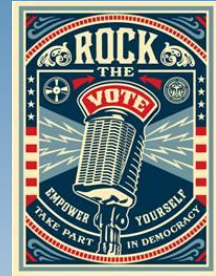
Estill County  
Schools





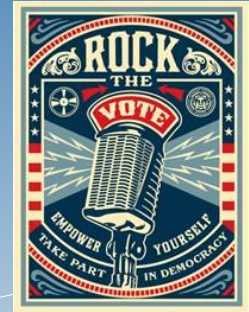
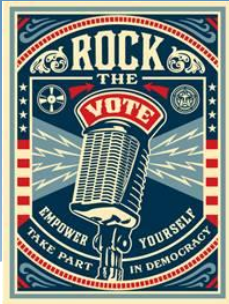


# Publicity Partners

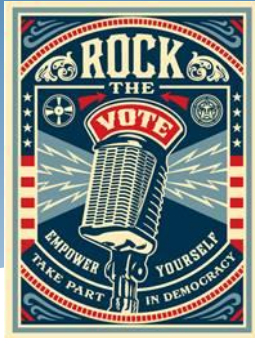


- \* One local radio station provided sound equipment and agreed to do a live broadcast of each forum, and the other station did a live broadcast as well
- \* Estill Action Group agreed to help emcee, and to share each forum via Facebook Live
- \* Both newspapers did feature articles ahead of the forums, and attended each one, giving great coverage
- \* Graphic artist for Estill Development Alliance created our forum flyers
- \* Forum flyers were prominently displayed by local businesses and government entities

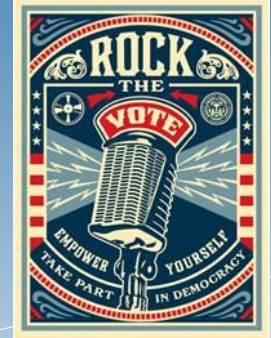
# At Least One Month Out



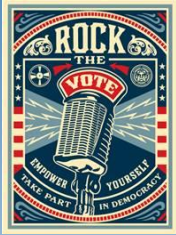
- \* Create a Google Form to be used by the public for submitting questions for each candidate forum (include question submission guidelines).
- \* Submit article to local newspapers about upcoming forums; include URL for Google Question Submission Form, as well as physical collection locations (courthouse and library) for voters to drop off questions (in sealed envelopes)
- \* Contact other local news media with basic information about how and where to submit forum questions
- \* Create forum events on Facebook and included hyperlink to Google Form for question submissions



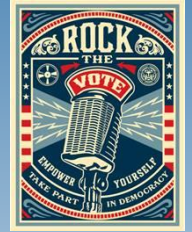
# Two to Three Weeks Out



- \* About two weeks prior to each forum, we sent a formal invitation to each candidate for the featured offices
- \* Each letter explained how forums would work, and asked that candidates confirm plans for participation and briefly answer three questions that we supplied to all candidates.\*
- \* *\*Libraries Transforming Communities, ALA*

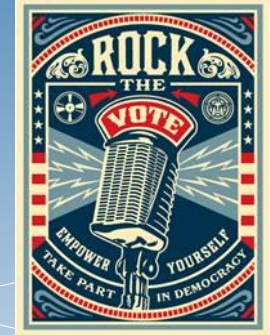


# Candidate Questionnaire

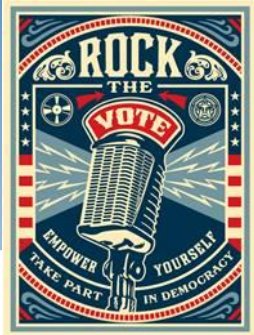


- \* Candidate's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- \* I am running for the office of: \_\_\_\_\_
- \* Please provide a brief written answer to each of the three questions below. Your written answers will be shared with the local newspapers, and may be made available to attendees on the night of your candidate forum at the Estill County High School.
  
- \* What are your aspirations and hopes for the people of Irvine or Estill County?
- \* \_\_\_\_\_
- \* \_\_\_\_\_
- \* \_\_\_\_\_
  
- \* What possible roadblocks or challenges stand in the way of reaching these aspirations?
- \* \_\_\_\_\_
- \* \_\_\_\_\_
- \* \_\_\_\_\_
  
- \* If you win the election, how do you think you might be able to help the people of Irvine/Estill County overcome these challenges?

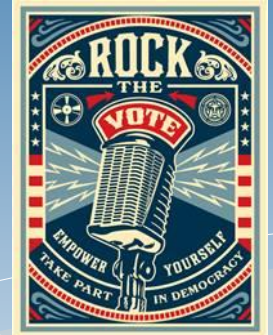
# Two to Three Weeks Out (cont.)



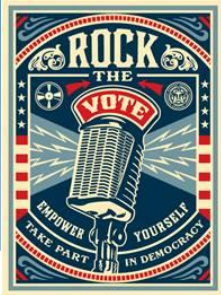
- \* Confirm venue for candidate forum (We used high school auditorium)
- \* Confirm emcees, timekeeper and moderator for each forum
- \* Request bio for each guest moderator



# One Week Out



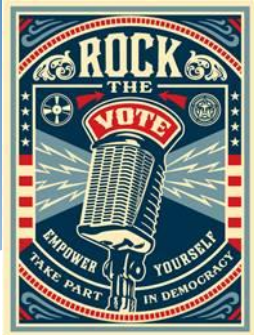
- \* Create candidate name placards and name cards for confirmed attendees
- \* Write first draft of emcee and moderator scripts
- \* Email reminders to media outlets
- \* Contact each confirmed candidate to answer any questions or concerns about his/her upcoming forum



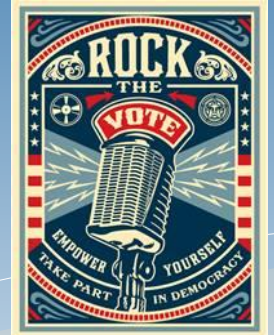
# Day Of Forum



- \* Hang out “Candidate Forum Tonight” Banner at library, court house, and at location of forum
- \* Collect and print out all submitted questions for that night’s forum (edit and combine similar questions)
- \* Make final changes to moderator/emcee scripts
- \* Arrive at forum location 30-60 minutes prior to start time
- \* Set up tables/chairs/mics, etc. (Our school and media partners did this)
- \* Greet candidates as they arrive and direct them to staging area

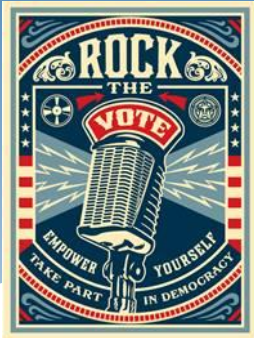


# Forum Partner DISCLAIMER

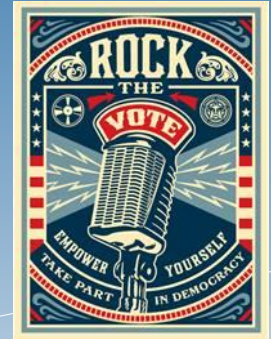


- \* We made sure to share the following disclaimer at each forum:
- \* *Please note that event sponsors and partners are conducting these forums as a community service, and are not publicly endorsing any candidate.*





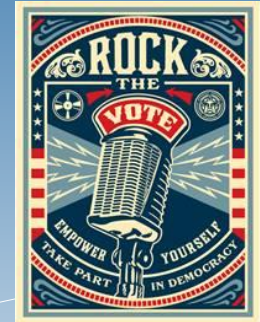
# Forum Guidelines



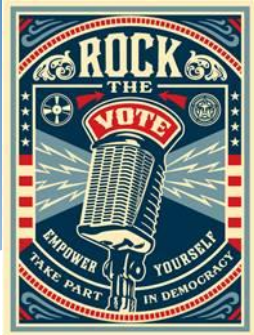
- \* *We ask that all cell phones be silenced or turned off during the forum*
- \* *We ask that audience members be respectful of the facilities and refrain from bringing food or drinks into the auditorium.*
- \* *Restrooms are located outside the auditorium doors, to the left.*



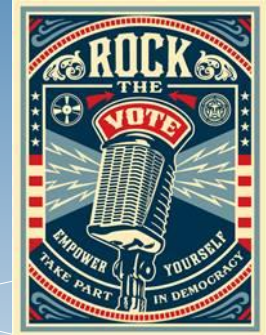
# Guidelines



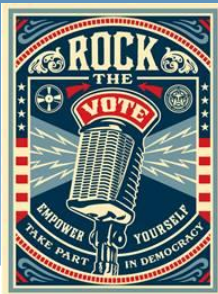
- \* *Please be respectful at all times; verbal attacks on speakers by audience members, or by other candidates, will not be tolerated.*
- \* *We ask that audience members refrain from talking loudly or calling out during the forum.*
- \* *School board policy requires that no materials endorsing any candidate be displayed or distributed on school property.*



# Guidelines



- \* *Tonight's forum will be broken into three parts since there are 18 candidates for magistrate. We will hear from District 1 candidates first. When they are done, District 2 candidates will take the stage, and the final candidates to take the stage tonight will be those who represent District 3.*
- \* *With each group, the order in which candidates speak will be determined by random drawing.*



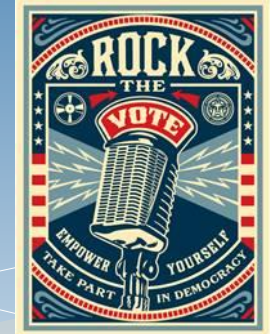
# Guidelines



- \* Once candidate order is determined, candidates will be introduced and given five minutes in which to speak about their candidacy
- \* **At no time** should a speaker refer to opposing candidates or opposing parties during his speech. **This forum is not a debate.**
- \* During each speech, the moderator will indicate when the speaker has two minutes remaining, and signal when time is up.

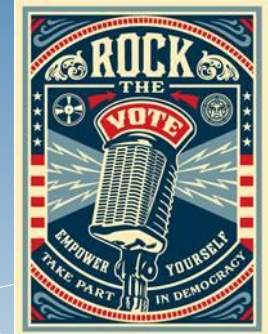


# Guidelines



- \* *Once every candidate has spoken, all candidates will have the opportunity to draw and answer a question submitted by the public.*
- \* *We will then pass the questions to the rest of the candidate field, proceeding in the order that candidates' names were originally drawn.*

# Our Question Submission Form



← How to submit a question to be considered for the Estill Co. Prima 📁 ★ 🎮 👁 ⚙ SEND ⋮ E

[QUESTIONS](#) [RESPONSES](#) 135

## How to submit a question to be considered for the Estill Co. November 2018 Candidate Forums

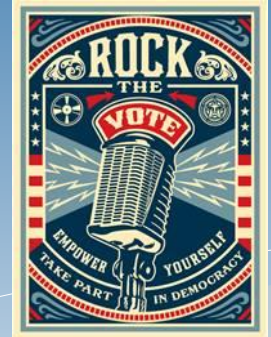
Please use this form to submit a brief question to be considered for one of the November Election candidate forums sponsored by Estill County Public Library, Estill Action Group, and WSKV, and in partnership with Estill County Schools, Citizen Voice & Times, Estill Tribune, and WCYO/WIRV/WBON. (Questions of a personal nature, or that are deemed to be inappropriate, will not be considered for use at the public forums.)

For which contested office do you wish to submit a question? \*

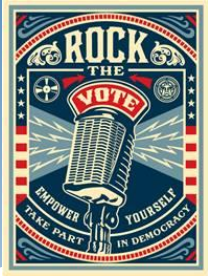
1. Estill County Sheriff
2. County Attorney
3. Estill County Constable
4. Estill County Jailer
5. Estill County Judge Executive

? ⌵

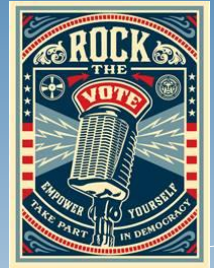
# Our Question Submission Guidelines



- \* Please submit your brief question to be considered for one of the candidate forums sponsored by Estill County Public Library, Estill Action Group, and WSKV, and in partnership with Estill County Schools, Citizen Voice & Times, Estill Tribune, and WCYO/WIRV/WBON.
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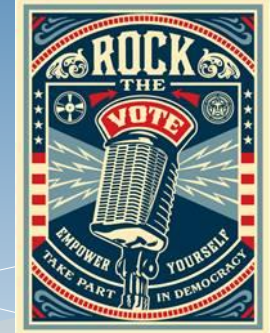


# Sample Questions



- \* *On what issues do you and your political opponent(s) agree?*
- \* *What do you see as the impact of voters who vote straight party lines?*
- \* *What concerns do you have about voters who vote against a candidate based on his stance on a single issue, rather than on the entire platform of that candidate?*
- \* *Do you have plans to reinstate curbside pickup of recyclables? If so, how might it be funded?*
- \* *Do you have plans to reopen the jail?*
- \* *Why do we need a jailer if we have no jail?*





# Questions?

Kathy Watson  
Estill County Public Library

[estillcolibrary@gmail.com](mailto:estillcolibrary@gmail.com)