New York State Public Campaign Finance Board to Release Debate Host Application

2026 marks the first year of mandatory debates for statewide candidates participating in the public campaign finance program

ALBANY, N.Y. (1/26/2026) The New York State Public Campaign Finance Board (PCFB) will release the application to host debates in the 2026 Primary and General Elections on **February 2, 2026**. The application will be available on the PCFB website and all PCFB social media accounts (Facebook, X, and Instagram). This year marks the first elections where statewide candidates will be required to participate in at least one debate if they are receiving public matching funds.

Organizations interested in hosting a debate must submit their applications by March 2, 2026. After the application period has closed, the list of applicants will be published on the PCFB website, where the public will have the opportunity to submit comments on their qualifications. The Board will review these comments before selecting the host.

Potential debate hosts must have been in existence for at least two years; they cannot be affiliated with any political party, political group, officeholder, or candidate running for office; nor can they endorse or donate to any candidate for the upcoming election. The debate must be televised and livestreamed online for free, as well as made accessible to those with disabilities.

“Bringing candidates to the debate stage is a vital step in keeping voters informed and candidates accountable to their constituents. We look forward to partnering with potential hosts to make this vision a reality,” said PCFB Chair Barbara Lifton.

“In facilitating these debates, we hope to further foster participation in the elections process by creating a public space for statewide candidates to address the issues that voters across New York care most about,” added PCFB Vice Chair Brian M. Kolb.

Excluding those who are running unopposed, all statewide candidates who are participating in the Public Campaign Finance Program are required to participate in at least one debate before each election. This includes candidates running for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and Comptroller. To take part in a debate, a candidate must raise and spend at least 5% of the public funding limit for the office before the last filing deadline before the debate. Candidates who are not participating in the Program may also qualify to join in the debate, provided they meet the eligibility criteria outlined by PCFB Debate Regulations.

For more information about the Public Campaign Finance Program, visit pcfb.ny.gov. If you have any questions about this press release, please contact Kathleen McGrath or Jennifer Wilson at the New York State Board of Elections Public Information Office at 518-474-1953 or info@elections.ny.gov.

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