

The secret of getting the top candidates to a political forum is to start early. As soon as the primaries are over, we are contacting the candidates to invite them to speak. We always pick a Sunday in October before early voting begins, and we make sure it does not conflict with other activities at the synagogue. It's always a breakfast, and we set aside two hours so that a candidate can arrive at 10 am and still hit another Sunday event elsewhere.

Our synagogue has members who are involved politically and can reach the candidates, and our moderator has more than three decades' experience covering politics and has no shortage of people he can call.

The candidates appear separately so there is no back and forth between them, just 30 to 45 minutes of an opening statement and then questions and answers. By weeding out the frivolous and gotcha questions and requiring people to submit them on cards rather than be allowed to make speeches from the floor, we ensure that the questions are substantive and focus on the issues of concern to our community.

Once the candidates are confirmed, we start publicity with our newsletter, our synagogue publication, a poster at the entrance to the synagogue, and emails to members of the Men's Club and our Sisterhood, which co-sponsors the event, The candidates contact their supporters as well.

We usually attract both the local media and candidates for other offices, who are introduced by the moderator.