

## **PRESS ADVISORY - June 1, 2009**

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The New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) is seeking sponsors for general election debates for gubernatorial candidates. Also, there is pending legislation to require one lieutenant gubernatorial debate.

Participation in two general election debates is required as a condition of each gubernatorial candidate's receipt of public matching funds. The first such debates were held in 1989. No general election debate is required to be held if only one candidate qualifies to receive public funds.

The Commission is required to select organizations to sponsor the mandatory debates. The deadline for receipt of applications to sponsor a general election debate is July 1, 2009, and the selection process for general election debate sponsors must be concluded by July 31, 2009. The Commission will meet on July 21st to select the sponsors.

The 2009 gubernatorial general election debates must occur between September 22 and October 23, 2009, unless the candidates agree to an emergency postponement of the second debate deadline.

In order to be considered by the Commission for debate sponsorship, a sponsor must not be affiliated with any political party or with any holder of or candidate for public office and must agree not to make any endorsement in the pending general election for the office of Governor until the completion of any debate which an organization may be selected to sponsor.

The organization must also be able to demonstrate experience since 1976 in sponsoring televised debates among candidates for New Jersey statewide office. Debate sponsor applicants which are either: any association of two or more separately-owned news publications or broadcasting outlets or any association of media correspondents are not required to demonstrate prior experience in televised candidate debates.

Representatives of organizations which meet the sponsorship criteria and wish to apply to sponsor one or more of the 2009 general election debates are invited to visit the Gubernatorial Public Financing link on the Commission's website to complete a "fill-in" application or may contact the Special Programs section at (609) 292-8700 for further information.