

[EP]

Sec. X. 17 V.S.A. chapter 35 (offenses against the purity of elections),
subchapter 4 is added to read:

Subchapter 4. Rights and Duties of Candidates

§ 2031. CANDIDATES; PUBLIC FORUMS; POLLS; DECORUM

(a) Forums and debates.

(1)(A) Any person who is legally permitted to be on a ballot as a candidate in a local, primary, or general election shall be permitted to participate in a publicly-advertised or -transmitted debate or forum that is offered to other candidates for the office for which that person is a candidate.

(B) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (A) of this subdivision (1), a host of a debate or forum shall not be required to permit a candidate to participate in the debate or forum if the host reasonably believes the candidate failed to maintain decorum in a previous debate or forum after the candidate was given one warning by the previous debate or forum host regarding the candidate's failure to maintain decorum.

(2) The host of the debate or forum shall permit each of the candidates described in subdivision (1) of this subsection to have an equal opportunity to speak and respond to any questions posed in the debate or forum.

(b) Polls. Any poll conducted for the purpose of analyzing an election for an office in this State shall include by name all candidates who are legally permitted to be on the ballot for that office.

(c) Decorum. Any candidate for any office in this State shall conduct himself or herself with complete decorum during his or her candidacy. As used in this section, decorum includes not using any costumes, props, signs, or loud or offensive language during the course of a forum or debate.