



Using Virtual Meetings as an Advocacy Tool: Planning Town Halls and Public Forums

As your chapter launches virtual meetings and events, you may be looking for ideas to continue the advocacy work you've done at the local, state, and federal level. There are great ways to help your chapter advocate for LGBTQ+ individuals and their families as effectively using virtual platforms, while respecting PFLAG's status as a 501 (c) 3 non-partisan, tax-exempt organization.

Planning Town Halls and Public Forums

PFLAG chapters can – and should – meet with elected officials and candidates in virtual public forums and town hall meetings. Virtual public forums are an excellent opportunity for PFLAG members and their communities to interact directly with candidates and elected officials on the issues that matter to them. The PFLAG Connects platform on Zoom is an excellent medium for these forums.

A few general tips:

1. Start planning early! It takes time to confirm participants, particularly when they are running for office. Need help with keeping the details in order? Try using our [event planning checklist](#)!
2. Work in coalition. Look for community partners and include them in your town hall or public forum. They can help you organize, moderate, and find participants/attendees.
3. Invite all candidates and officials who are running for office, regardless of party affiliation. Not all parties must have a representative in attendance, but they must be invited.
4. All candidates/officials who attend should be treated fairly, impartially, and with respect.
5. Set the ground rules for the forum in advance and share them with candidates and officials who have agreed to participate.

A few important details for doing these events on the PFLAG Connects Zoom platform:

1. Follow all of the same safety and security precautions your chapter has put into place for your support group meetings. Need a reminder? Check out our guidelines [here](#).
2. Since this is a unique event that requires event and participant management, in addition to your usual safety and security precautions, for these events, you must also:
 - [Mute all participants as they enter](#)
 - [Disable participants ability to unmute themselves](#)
 - [Limit the chat function so participants can only send messages to the host and co-host](#)

These added security precautions will prevent people from interrupting the participants in your town hall or public forum and give the moderator a chance to review and screen questions.

The information in this section is also available in video format [here](#) and [here](#). If you have questions please reach out to Diego Sanchez, Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Partnerships (dsanchez@pflag.org).