



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE:

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PRESS RELEASE

Frederick M. Herrmann, Executive Director of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC), announced today that steps are being taken by the Commission to implement the debate requirement provision of the New Jersey Gubernatorial Public Financing Program.

Participation in two primary and two general election debates is required as a condition of each candidate's receipt of public matching funds. The first such debates were held in 1989. Herrmann noted that no primary election debate is required to be held if only one candidate for a party's nomination qualifies to receive public funds.

Herrmann explained that it is the responsibility of the Commission to select organizations to sponsor the mandatory debates. He indicated that the deadline for receipt of applications to sponsor a primary election debate is March 17, 1997, and that the selection process for primary election debates sponsors must be concluded by April 16, 1997. The Commission will meet on April 15 to select the sponsors.

The 1997 gubernatorial primary election debates must occur between April 16 and May 23, 1997, unless the candidates agree to an emergency postponement of the second debate deadline.

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Herrmann outlined the specific statutory criteria which must be met by an organization 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 primary election for the office of Governor until the completion of any debate which the 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.

Herrmann further explained that debate sponsor applicants which are associations of two or more separately-owned news publications or broadcasting outlets and associations of press 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 1997 primary election debates are invited to contact the Commission at (609) 292-8700 for an application and for further information, Herrmann announced.

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