

Guide to the Endorsement Form

The last step in securing a Sierra Club endorsement for all California local and legislative races is a vote by the Northern or Southern California Candidate Review Committee (CRC). This vote culminates much hard work by your endorsement team.

The CRC's job is to help maintain the highly prized nature of Sierra Club endorsements by ensuring process quality. The last thing any of us wants is for an endorsement to fail because the process fell below Club standards, or for an endorsement to be delayed due to inadequate information – but in fact that happens in each cycle. To help you avoid these problems, the CRCs offer the suggestions below.

CRC consideration of your endorsement begins when you submit a Candidate Approval Form (Form) to the CRC. The Form must demonstrate that each critical requirement of the process has been met. Unfortunately, the Form comes as a shock at the last moment to some endorsement teams, as do some of the key Sierra Club requirements.

Thus, our first suggestion is that **Political Chairs give endorsement team leaders a blank Form at the beginning** of the endorsement process, not the end, along with a copy of this Guide, and provide ongoing mentorship to new participants.

Our second is that the CRCs are not rubber stamps. They will carefully consider your endorsement, with particular focus on consistency with the Compliance Guidelines, so please do not expect quick turnaround, particularly during heavy endorsement season.

Errors that may result in disapprovals

The most frustrating outcome is when an endorsement process error is so critical that the endorsement fails to meet Sierra Club standards and must be denied. The most common catastrophic errors are failure to:

- 1) give adequate weight to **incumbency** [as detailed by Compliance Guidelines beginning at 2-300],
- 2) sufficiently research and explain the **environmental records** of all viable candidates,
- 3) seriously assess the **electability** of the candidates, and
- 4) make a determined effort to **contact all** viable candidates.

If Forms fail to demonstrate adequate fulfillment of these requirements, at minimum the endorsement will be delayed. If further inquiry determines that the issues have been inadequately addressed in the endorsement process itself, not just on the Form, endorsements may be denied for failing to meet the Guidelines.

One of the more common situations where endorsement teams sometimes take inappropriate shortcuts is when one of their Chapter's own activists is a candidate. The fact that a colleague is running does not obviate the need for a full endorsement process.

Also, please note that where we are endorsing against an incumbent, please be sure to present research on the incumbent's environmental record, which must be shown to be less than "good." It is not enough to demonstrate that the challenger would be better.

Tips for avoiding delays:

1) Inaccurate or insufficient ExCom Vote Counts or, when required, PolCom Vote Counts will delay approval, as will failure to provide the names and reasons for recusals (particularly considering the increased focus on conflicts of interest in the Compliance Guidelines (2-610)). (Please note that the numbers in the line "Yes" + "No" + "Abstain" + "Absent" should add up to "# of members eligible to vote excluding recusals" on the following line.) Also please be sure to provide the date of the vote.

2) For non-incumbents the substantive questions on the Form (Section 3) are listed in rough order of priority. Answers that suggest a lack of serious inquiry, particularly on the earlier top priority questions, are likely to cause delay, at minimum.

3) Please read and answer all the questions. Blank or unresponsive answers will cause delay while you are asked to answer the questions more completely.

4) We often get an answer of "Yes" to the question, "If elected, why do you believe the candidate will work with the Sierra Club?" Please explain why.

5) To avoid long delays in submitting Forms after ExCom votes, please try to complete a draft form before the vote and submit it to ExCom. (Some Chapters require this.)

6) Please submit each Candidate Approval Form as an attachment to a separate email with a subject line format "Endorsement Request, Hilda Solis, Los Angeles County Supervisor District 1," for example. Failure to do so complicates CRC votes and record-keeping and may cause delays. This single candidate format is appropriate even when you are submitting multiple endorsements for the same multi-seat board. (You can refer to other Forms you are submitting for the same office and copy and paste duplicative information when appropriate.)

Thank you so much for your Sierra Club endorsement work! You are making an important contribution to the environment.