

How to engage candidates at events.

You do not need to be a policy expert to have a useful conversation with a candidate.

Town halls, community meetings, chamber events, candidate forums, and other public gatherings give voters an opportunity to learn how candidates think about issues that affect their professions, businesses, and communities.

The goal is simple:

Introduce yourself, explain why the issue matters to you, and ask a clear question.

Before the event

1. Know who you are going to hear.

Spend a few minutes reviewing the candidate's website and public statements.

You do not need to know everything they have said. You just want enough context to ask an informed question.

2. Pick one issue.

Trying to cover three or four ECA priorities in one interaction rarely works.

Choose the issue that matters most to you, your organization, or your community.

3. Prepare your introduction.

Keep it to about 15 seconds.

“Hi, I’m [NAME]. I live/work in [CITY], and I work in the business and professional events industry as [ROLE].”

Then establish why the issue matters:

“Our industry brings thousands of people and businesses together, and [ISSUE] has a real impact on our ability to do that.”

4. Prepare one question.

ECA Votes 2026 Midterm Voter Guide has 14 questions designed for exactly this purpose.

Pick one. Shorten it if necessary. Write it on your phone.

At the event

1. Make it personal.

A statistic can provide context. Your own experience makes the issue real.

Instead of:

“Visa processing is a problem.”

Try:

“My event relies on international exhibitors, and some have struggled to obtain visa appointments in time to participate.”

2. Ask, don't lecture.

The purpose of an election event is to learn where the candidate stands.

Ask one clear question and give them room to answer.

3. Be concise.

If you have the microphone, assume you have 30–60 seconds, not five minutes.

A simple formula works: **WHO I AM → WHY IT MATTERS → MY QUESTION**

4. Ask for specifics.

If the answer is broad, a respectful follow-up can help:

“What would that look like in practice?”

or

“What would you want Congress to do?”

After the event

- Thank the candidate or staff member if you have the opportunity.
- If the conversation was substantive, follow up with a brief email and a relevant resource. ECA can help with this!
- And if you took a photo or learned something useful, feel free to share the experience with your colleagues or online.