

Publications: Representative Government

PICK A CANDIDATE

ON HOW THEY CAMPAIGN

The way a candidate runs a campaign can provide important clues to how that candidate will perform as a public official, once elected. A contender who runs an open, straightforward, issue-oriented campaign can be expected to become an accessible, forthright and thoughtful public official. So evaluate the contenders on their campaign performance. Take another look at See Through the Images to rate campaign materials and check the following criteria for an open campaign.

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Accessibility. Is the candidate willing to debate with opponents? Does the candidate meet regularly with the press? Does the candidate accept speaking engagements before different groups, even those that might not be sympathetic? Does the candidate appear in person or avoid public scrutiny by sending "stand-ins"?

Information. Do campaign ads provide clear information on issue positions? Can you easily obtain position papers or answers to your questions? Are a candidate's qualifications clearly stated, and are they the ones that will count in public office? Is the candidate's voting record easy to get?

Openness. Seeing a candidate "pressing the flesh" in a parking lot or at a huge political rally won't tell you much about the candidate's stance. Most of us must rely on the candidate's use of the media to find out more. Here are some things to watch for.

1. In a broadcast interview, who is the interviewer? Is it an ally, asking only friendly, carefully phrased questions? Is it an antagonist, out to make the candidate look bad, rather than shed light for the voter? Is the candidate being hounded or asked questions that you feel are pointless? Or is the

interviewer a regular station or network staff person, with no special ax to grind? Does the interviewer follow up, if answers are evasive or off the point?

2. In a question-and-answer session, what about the audience? Where did they come from? Who selected them-the candidate's party or staff? The broadcaster? A disinterested party? If you're not sure, call the station or campaign headquarters and ask.
3. Where does the candidate appear? Does the campaign emphasize media events, where the candidate can be seen but not heard-a parade, a beauty contest, a county fair? Talking on only narrow, sure-fire subjects to safe audiences is a cop out. Voters deserve a broader perspective.

ON THE BIG ISSUES

Pinpoint the issues that are important to you. Decide what changes you feel that your community, state and country need most. What do you want to keep the same? Which of your interests are served by the programs each candidate is proposing? As you ponder, weigh alternatives. Listen to people on both sides of an issue. Look at cause and effect. Consider what you have to trade off to get what you want.

NOW ... PICK A CANDIDATE

The checklist on the next page is a sampler of national issues. Add your own. Then make new charts for state and local issues. Rank the issues in order of their importance to you. Find out where the candidates stand on your top priorities. Which candidate most closely shares your views on important matters?

Your Priority Number	THE ISSUES	The Candidate Whose Position Is Most Like Yours
	The Economy How do we reduce the deficit . . . and keep the economy healthy? How can unemployment be reduced? Should we cut government spending? For what? Should we raise taxes? Provide jobs – through public service programs? By stimulating the private sector? By encouraging or limiting foreign trade?	
	Environment What needs to be done to preserve our air, water, energy and land	

	resources? How can we solve the problems of hazardous wastes? Acid rain? How should costs be apportioned? Are current regulations adequate? What about enforcement?	
	Government spending How do we set budget priorities? Are we spending too much on some programs? Too little on others? If cuts are needed, where and how should they be made? Do the effects of cuts fall unfairly on any one group? Is revenue adequate? What are the best revenue sources?	
	Foreign policy Should we take more of a leadership role in the world? What does that mean? What specific measures should we take to ease tensions between the U.S. and Russia? In the Middle East? In Latin America? Should we increase defense spending, or cut it back? How should defense dollars be spent? What about arms control? What should be the U.S. role in the United Nations? Should we invest more in economic development aid?	
	Social services What role should the government play in meeting the needs of the poor, the elderly and the disabled. The special needs of women? How can we best help the disadvantaged to become self-sufficient? How can adequate housing be assured for all who need it? Should changes be made in Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare programs? Which levels of government can most fairly and effectively supply such services?	

List other national issues that you think are important. Assign them a priority. Do the same with state and local issues and candidates. Then make your choice count in the voting booth.

NOW THAT YOU'VE THOUGHT THROUGH YOUR CHOICES DO SOMETHING

1. Back candidates you believe in.
2. Talk to your friends and co-workers about "your" candidate.
3. Don't be afraid to ask tough questions at candidate meetings, at rallies and when a campaign worker rings your doorbell.

4. Call TV and radio stations to praise or criticize campaign spots.
5. Be a letter writer. Tell candidates, newspapers and party leaders how you feel about the issues.

Then:

VOTE

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