

## RATE THE CANDIDATES ON HOW THEY CAMPAIGN

The way a candidate runs a campaign can provide important clues as to how that candidate will perform as a public official, once elected. A contender who runs an open, issues-oriented campaign can be expected to become an accessible, forthright and thoughtful public official.

### AN OPEN CAMPAIGN HAS:

**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?

**Information** Do campaign ads provide clear information on issue positions? Can you easily obtain position papers or answers to your questions? Is the candidate's voting record easy to get?

**Openness** Seeing a candidate at a rally or shaking hands in a parking lot does not tell us much about his or her positions. Most of us rely on the media, so pay attention to the following during interviews and forums:

- ★ Does the candidate give full answers on your key issues?
- ★ What happens when answers are evasive or off the point?
- ★ Who selected the audience? A disinterested party or a political party?
- ★ In what venues does the candidate make appearances? Does the campaign emphasize events where the candidate can only talk on safe and narrow topics?

## SORTING IT ALL OUT

Ask yourself these final questions:

- ★ Which candidate's views on the issues did you agree with the most?
- ★ Who ran the fairest campaign?
- ★ Which candidate was most knowledgeable on the issues?
- ★ Which candidate has the leadership qualities you are looking for?

*Is the choice clear?  
If so, pick a candidate.*

## NOW THAT YOU'VE THOUGHT THROUGH YOUR CHOICES, DO SOMETHING!

- ★ Back candidates you believe in.
- ★ Talk to your friends and co-workers about "your" candidate.
- ★ Don't be afraid to ask tough questions at candidate meetings, at rallies, and when a campaign worker rings your doorbell.
- ★ Share your opinion with print, broadcast, and social media.

### VOTE!

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization devoted to promoting informed and active participation in government. The League does not support or oppose candidates or political parties. For more information, contact the League of Women Voters.

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VOTE

## Choosing a Candidate in Wyoming

The League of Women Voters of Wyoming has a long, proud history of focusing election campaigns on the issues and helping voters get clear, honest answers to their questions.

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[www.facebook.com/WyoLWV](https://www.facebook.com/WyoLWV)

## DECIDE WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN A CANDIDATE

Candidates can be judged by the positions they take on issues, by their party, and by the leadership qualities and experience they would bring to office. The first step is to decide the issues you care about and the qualities you want in a leader.

## GATHER MATERIALS ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Sources of information may include:

- ★ campaign literature
- ★ candidate websites and social media press reports
- ★ ads (radio, television, mailings)
- ★ information about candidates' parties and platforms
- ★ candidate speeches
- ★ candidate debates

## TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

**TV and radio ads** What did you learn about the candidate from the ad? Did you find out anything about issues or qualifications? Was the ad designed to appeal to a select group (women, elderly, minorities)? If something targets your emotions heavily or exclusively, find out what you can about the facts as well.

**Fact Checking** Use established and impartial fact checking sites to learn more about the candidates and their claims.

**Pamphlets, Flyers, and Candidate Websites** These may contain valid, substantive information or they may be full of distortions and evasions. Be on the lookout for accusations or lies about opponents.

**Political Party and Party Platform** A candidate's party may take a stand on issues that you care about but the candidate has not addressed directly.

## RECOGNIZE DISTORTION TECHNIQUES

**Name-Calling/Appeals to Prejudice** These are attacks on an opponent based on characteristics that will not affect performance in office.

**Sidetracking** References to race, ethnicity or marital status can be subtly used to instill prejudice.

**Loaded Statements** "I oppose wasteful spending" doesn't say much - and it implies that the candidate's opponent favors it.

**Catchwords** Beware of empty phrases, such as "law and order"... "the American way", that are designed to trigger a knee-jerk, emotional reaction rather than to inform.

**Baiting** Politics is a tough game, but badgering and intimidation are unnecessary campaign tactics. Think twice about a candidate who tries to harass or denigrate an opponent.

## SPOT PHONY ISSUES

**Passing the Blame** When one candidate accuses another party or candidate of being the cause of a major problem such as unemployment or inflation, fact check the statements.

**Promising the Sky** These are unrealistic promises that no elected official could fulfill.

**Evading Real Issues** Many candidates work very hard to avoid giving direct answers to direct questions. Watch out for candidates who talk about benefits and never mention costs or details of how the program will work.

## LEARN HOW OTHERS VIEW THE CANDIDATE

Once you've gathered information from campaigns and other sources, you will want to learn what other people think of the candidate. But do not discount your own informed judgments!

**Seek the opinions of others in the community** Find out who they support and why, and what shaped their political opinions.

**Learn about endorsements** Endorsements provide clues to the issues a candidate supports.

**Look into campaign contributions** Where did the candidate get the funds to finance her/his campaign? How might these contributions affect the candidate's conduct in office?

## BE A SMART POLL WATCHER

Before you believe everything you read in a poll, ask these questions:

**Who sponsored the poll?** When parties and candidates pay for polls, they might not publish unfavorable data.

**What questions were asked?** Were they slanted? You can spot blatantly biased questions, but also look for ones that subtly steer a respondent to a certain answer or leave no room for a 'Yes,if...' or a 'No, but...'

**Who and how many were interviewed?** How were respondents selected? The selection needs to be random or at least represent all segments of the population proportionately. The smaller the sample of respondents, the wider the margin of error in the findings.