



The League of Women Voters of Oakland

CHOOSING A CANDIDATE *WHAT YOU SHOULD CONSIDER*

What matters when you vote?

1. A reputation for honesty and integrity? Hard work and attention to detail? Experience? New ideas? Strong educational background? A self-made person? Party support? Support for a single issue?
2. Are you most concerned with how a candidate's plans affect you personally? How they affect the state? How they affect the country?
3. Are lower taxes a high priority? Or would you rather pay more taxes for better services, security, and the tackling of problems more expeditiously?
4. Are you inclined to support candidates of your sex, race, religion, ethnic background, or social class?
5. Do you support candidates because you like their appearance, style, speeches, or supporters?

What is the purpose of political advertising?

Candidates want your vote!

What techniques do political ads use to win your vote?

1. **Distortion**
When talking about an opponent's voting record, a candidate's statement may be accurate, but does it tell the whole story? Does it distort the record, take things out of context, or give partial truths?
2. **The loaded question**
This is an easy way to distort the facts.
3. **Emotional appeal**
Candidates may use emotional appeals. They may describe their war injuries, their impoverished childhoods, or other personal obstacles they have overcome.
4. **Relevancy**
Are relevant issues discussed?
5. **Name-calling**
Do candidates use names to bias voters against their opponents? Name-calling appeals to prejudices.
6. **Appeal to fear or prejudice**
Are candidates' attacks based on family, ethnicity, gender, religion, or race? Are voters confused by the wording of these attacks? Are the candidate's comments consistent with your own experience?
7. **Guilt by association**
Candidates may try to discredit opponents by associating them with people, causes, or groups disfavored by the constituency to whom they are appealing.
8. **Catchword**
Candidates often use catchwords designed to get an immediate emotional reaction rather than an informed one: "Law and order" – "End welfare as we know it" – "Tough on crime" – "Welfare of our children" – "Family values".
9. **Credit and blame**
Incumbents may be blamed or credited for many things over which they may or may not have control.

YOU CAN VOTER SMARTER – cont'd

10. Unrealistic promises

Does the candidate make unrealistic promises that no official could carry out? Does the candidate provide credible plans for how he or she will achieve those goals?

11. Misleading

Candidates may use statistics to make a point. Statistics may be technically accurate, but selective use of statistics can be misleading.

12. Information

Do candidates provide relevant information about themselves, their views, and their plans? Do they withhold information that might be relevant?

13. Visibility

Are candidates visible? Do they give their views, take part in debates, and state their opinions on issues? Do their speeches deal with real issues and offer realistic solutions or do they make broad generalizations that may sound good, but lack substance?

What else should we question in political ads and speeches?

1. Is the interviewer objective? Does the interviewer follow up on answers that are evasive or off the point?
2. Is the interviewer an ally, asking only friendly, carefully phrased or softball questions?
3. Is the interviewer an antagonist, asking questions that will make the candidate look bad, rather than shedding light on the issues?
4. Do candidates appear only under circumstances that are carefully arranged to make them look good?

Other techniques that can affect our thinking

1. Use of color
2. Patriotic props
3. Unflattering picture of opponent
4. Fast images
5. Music
6. Humor

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