LWV®

LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT
EDUCATION FUND

HOW DO I CHOOSE A CANDIDATE IN CONNECTICUT?

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DECIDE WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

Candidates can be judged by…

- Their positions on issues.
- Their party.
- Their background and experience.
- Their leadership abilities.

The first step is to decide which issues *you* care about and the qualities *you* want in a leader.

FIND OUT WHO'S RUNNING IN YOUR CITY OR TOWN

Candidates in Connecticut are selected by the major parties during their conventions held in May in preparation for the Connecticut primaries, which are usually held during the second week of August. **Important to remember:** In Connecticut, you must be a member of either the Republican or Democratic Party to vote in that party's primary. Once the primaries are over, your Town Clerk and Registrar of Voters will have the winning candidates' names placed on the ballot along with the names of petitioning and minor party candidates.

Places to find information about candidates…

- Democratic and Republican Town Committee websites: your city or town website may have links to these.
- Party/Candidate Facebook pages and other social media.
- Campaign literature.
- Local newspapers, radio and television station news reports.
- Candidate forums/debates or other public events hosted by your local League of Women Voters and other sponsors.

USE A DISCERNING EYE WHEN REVIEWING CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

Anyone can create what looks like an impartial, fact-based website, but instead may be sponsored by an organization or group with a specific slant or bias on an issue. It is important to use established and impartial fact checking sites to learn about the candidates and their claims.

Be cautious and careful…

RECOGNIZE DISTORTION TECHNIQUES

Name Calling/Appeals to Prejudice: These are attacks on an opponent based on characteristics that will not affect performance in office. References to race, ethnicity, gender, or marital status can be subtly used to instill prejudice.

Loaded Statements and Over-Promising: "I oppose wasteful spending" doesn't say much—and it implies that the candidate's opponent favors it. Be careful of unrealistic promises that no elected official could fulfill.

Catchwords: Beware of empty phrases, such as "law and order" or "the American way", designed to create an emotional, knee-jerk 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 uses harassment to make opponents look weak or out of control.

Evading Real Issues: Some candidates avoid giving direct answers to direct questions. Watch out for candidates who talk about benefits, but never provide details of how a program will work.

LEARN HOW OTHERS VIEW THE CANDIDATE

Seek the opinions of others in the community: Who do they support? Why? What shaped their political opinions?

Learn about endorsements: Endorsements by others can provide clues to the issues a candidate supports.

Examine the source of a candidate's 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?

Do not discount your own informal judgements!

PAY ATTENTION TO POLLS

Before you believe everything you read in a poll, ask yourself…

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

What questions were asked? Were they slanted? It's easy to spot blatantly biased questions, but also look for ones that steer a respondent towards a certain answer.

Who and how many were interviewed? How were respondents selected? The selection should 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.

A CANDIDATE'S CAMPAIGN CAN TELL YOU A LOT

The way a candidate runs a campaign can provide important clues as to how that candidate will perform as a public official, once elected…

Accessibility: Is the candidate willing to debate with opponents? Does the candidate regularly meet 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 answers to your questions? Is the candidate's voting record easy to get?

Openness: Pay attention to the following during interviews and forums…

- Does the candidate give full answers on your key issues?
- Are answers evasive or off point?
- Is the audience hand-picked? Is the event sponsored by an impartial group? Or by 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, DO SOMETHING!

- Back candidates you can 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.
- Write letters. Tell newspapers how you feel about the issues.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, VOTE!!!
You can check your voter registration at
www.dir.ct.gov/sots/LookUp.aspx

our voting website is:
www.votect.net