

Evaluating Political Candidates

Article By:

Health Government Relations Team

With Election Day less than 100 days away, primary season is winding down and the candidates for the general elections (Presidential, Congressional, state, and local) in November have become more apparent. As the choices for November's election are clearer, how does one go about evaluating the candidates? Voting is an important civic responsibility and making an informed choice when voting is essential. Below are some tips and resources to help you research candidates' positions on issues that are of importance to you.

- First, decide what issues and qualities are most important to you. You may deem health care, the economy, foreign policy, or something else most important, but it is essential to evaluate your priorities and stances before attempting to evaluate the candidates' positions. Also, think about what personal qualities you think are important – past experience, previous leadership or political positions, personality, etc.
- Visit the candidates' websites – either their official website if they already hold office or their campaign website – to find out their positions. Candidates generally have an “issues” section where they address major policy topics.
 - To research the Presidential candidates, visit the campaign websites of [Barack Obama](#) and [Mitt Romney](#).
 - If you do not already know who represents you in Congress, visit the [U.S. House of Representatives](#) and [U.S. Senate](#) websites and search by your zip code or state to find the Members of Congress representing your state and district. These official websites can give you an idea of issues important to each Member and past actions they have taken. Those running for reelection will also have a separate campaign website, which can be found by searching for the Member on the internet. The title of these websites is usually something such as “Eric Cantor for Congress” or “Tammy Baldwin for Senate” while the official website will generally have a title along the lines of “Rep. Eric Cantor,” “Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin,” or “Max Baucus: U.S. Senator from Montana.”
 - Likewise, to find your state representatives, your state's official government page should have a search function to find out who represents you more locally.
 - To find out who is challenging these incumbents, either search the internet or visit a site such as the League of Women Voter's “[Vote411](#)” site. Vote411 allows you to enter your address and find your local, state, federal district numbers, which can then be used to search for candidates running in those races.

In addition to checking out issues, official and campaign websites also usually have a biographical section, which can provide information on the candidates' previous experience, family, and civic involvement. These personal factors may also weigh on your decision.

- Look up candidates' records, or any statements they have made or how they have previously voted, on your selected issues. This may be harder to find (or may not be possible) if a candidate has never held elected office before. For current U.S. House and Senate members, visit [Thomas](#), the Library of Congress' website, to look up cosponsorship of bills. Additionally, the "issues" section on both official and campaign websites can provide information on previous support or opposition and actions the candidate has taken on an issue. Campaign literature can also provide insight.
- Look to see who has endorsed the candidates. Websites like [Open Secrets](#) also will provide clues as to where candidates' campaign funding is coming from – possibly from people or organizations you trust (or disagree with).
- Carefully consider what others – opposing candidates, the news, even your friends and relatives – say about the candidate. Monitor the news and listen to what others are saying but be on the lookout for any bias or "spin." Be wary of any TV ad tactics appealing to emotions – look for any buried messages about issues beneath the "attacks."
- Finally, evaluate and match your findings with the issues and qualities you outlined as important to you. In some cases, a clear choice that matches your criteria may be evident early on in your research, other times a distinction between candidates or one candidate who obviously identifies with your views may not be as clear.

Researching candidates does not need to be an extremely time consuming activity – using the resources and tips above, look into candidates in as much or as little detail as you feel is necessary. The important thing is to make a knowledgeable choice aligned with your values going into the voting booth on November 6th!

© 2025 Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP. All Rights Reserved.

National Law Review, Volume II, Number 217

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/evaluating-political-candidates>