
A VOTING GUIDE

HOW TO RESEARCH CANDIDATES AND ISSUES



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ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE EVERY YEAR

Though congressional races often receive the most attention, the many state and local elections taking place across the country every year — which will decide who serves as judges, mayors, sheriffs, school board members, and more — will also have far-reaching effects on the lives of millions of people for many years to come.

Because state and local elections receive less media coverage, it can sometimes be hard to find information on who and what is on your ballot. The good news, however, is that there are many resources, both online and in your community, that can help you better understand what's at stake in state and local elections this season — and many of these resources also provide information on congressional races, so you can be fully prepared when you cast your ballot. This election research guide will help ensure that you and members of your community are leaving no power on the table.

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vote411.org



VOTE 411

English ▾



ELECTION INFORMATION **YOU NEED**

Brought to you by the League of
Women Voters Education Fund



Register to Vote



Verify Voter Registration



Find What's On Your Ballot



HAVE YOUR CANDIDATES ANSWERED OUR QUESTIONS?

If not, see how you can help! [Find out](#)



FIND WHAT'S ON YOUR BALLOT

Before you begin evaluating candidates or issues, you'll need to know the races and ballot measures on which you'll be voting. One way to find out is by entering your address into sample ballot generators — like those at **Vote411** or **Ballotpedia**, for example.

This is an easy way to learn when the next election in your state and locality is taking place. These tools will also generate a list of candidates and issues that will be on your ballot when you vote. It may be helpful to check both ballot generator tools to see which has more details on your state or local races.

→ vote411.org/ballot

→ [ballotpedia.org Sample_Ballot_Lookup](https://ballotpedia.org/Sample_Ballot_Lookup)

CONSULT NONPARTISAN SOURCES FOR CANDIDATE AND ISSUE PROFILES

Several nonpartisan online resources will provide you with a comprehensive look at candidates' backgrounds and stances on policies and issue areas. Many of these resources also offer background information on possible ballot measures, such as amendments to state constitutions. Because some websites may have more comprehensive information for your desired locality, candidate, or issue than others, it is best to use multiple sources to gain as much insight as possible.

RESOURCE 1

VOTE SMART

Use the **ballot measures tool**, which will break down key ballot measures in your state of residence.

→ [justfacts.votesmart.org/
elections/ballot-measures](https://justfacts.votesmart.org/elections/ballot-measures)

RESOURCE 2

VOTE 411

Use the **sample ballot generator** and click through candidates and issues.

→ vote411.org/ballot

RESOURCE 3

BALLOTPEdia

Use the **sample ballot generator** and click through candidates and issues.

→ [ballotpedia.org/
Sample_Ballot_Lookup](https://ballotpedia.org/Sample_Ballot_Lookup)

CHECK OUT A CANDIDATE'S WEBSITE

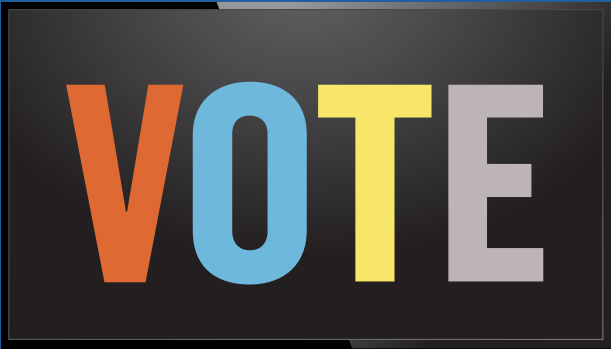
You can get a sense of a candidate's background and position on various issues by looking at their campaign website. Even though a candidate's website will be biased in their own favor, comparing sites should give you a good sense of each candidate's background and experience.





HARNESS SOCIAL MEDIA

You can use social media to see how the candidates and their campaigns are interacting with the public on a day-to-day basis. After looking at a candidate's Twitter feed, Facebook page, Instagram account, and/or YouTube channel, you will have a better sense of their priorities, values, and style.



VOTE

STAY CONNECTED WITH YOUR LOCAL NEWS

You can inform yourself through your local newspapers, radio, and television news. These sources can tell you about candidates' public appearances, their recent statements to prospective voters and the media, and how they're viewed by other members of the community. Local news, including your city's public access TV channel, may also have information about candidate forums hosted by nonpartisan groups, such as the **League of Women Voters** or the **American Association of University Women**.

ASK YOUR FELLOW COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Another way to learn about a candidate is to ask your neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family members. If a candidate is already in office and is running for reelection, speaking with fellow members of your community can give you a strong sense of how the incumbent's policies have affected people's lives. Your neighbors may offer new perspectives on a candidate or issue that you might have not previously considered.



Taking a little time to gather information about legislative and judicial candidates and ballot questions will help you feel fully prepared when it comes time to cast your ballot, whichever way you choose to do so — by mail, early in-person voting, or heading to the polls on Election Day.

Remember, you have the power to shape the leadership and investments in your community by being informed and voting for every race and question on the ballot in every election.



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