Please remember…

In a regular year, mass media is all about the hype.

It’s even worse during election years, so try not to rely exclusively on news outlets, magazines, websites, radio or television talk show hosts for your complete understanding of a candidate.

Please consult multiple sources and use your library.

Never venture into voting booths unaware.

Please ask all the questions and do the research required to reach the truth before you cast your vote.

Educated voters are the essence of democracy!

For more information…

Please visit our online Election guide at www.thrall.org/election2020

We also offer free Critical Thinking Skills guides at www.thrall.org/think

For additional research assistance…

Please contact our Reference Department at (845) 341-5461 or use our free online Ask a Librarian service at www.thrall.org/ask
Your vote counts! In fact, it counts so much that over a billion dollars could be spent in the coming months to influence it. Not only that, but it’s possible other countries might attempt to persuade your political preferences through social media and other ways on and beyond the Internet.

With so much at stake – our nation’s future and the future of you and your loved ones, friends, and associates – it’s incredibly important you evaluate information sources carefully and remain vigilant as attempts to sway your vote can arrive from all angles: robocalls, polls, Political Action Committees (PACs / Super PACs), advertisements, websites, Twitter and Facebook, and more – not the least of which the candidates themselves and their adversaries.

How can you survive the avalanche of ads, the relentless rhetoric, the political propaganda, and disinformation to be unleashed? Quite well, actually – if you prepare now!

Please be prepared to...

- **not** be easily swayed by words, images, or feelings. Positive political advertisements try to portray (or overstate) a candidate’s strengths. The uplifting background music, attractive imagery, and reassuring statements of a professional announcer are all designed to make you feel that particular candidate is a good choice – even if the facts suggest otherwise. Also, some candidates might be particularly skilled at making incredible claims (or even outrageous statements) simply to get voters’ attention or to appeal to (and even exploit) voters’ hopes or fears.

- **investigate any claims made** – especially negative ads which try to denounce or discredit a candidate in any number of ways. The worst kinds of these ads attack a person’s character instead of her or his record of achievements or failures. Such ads try to get you to doubt or disregard a candidate.

- **watch for inconsistencies.** Has a candidate switched positions (“flip-flopped”) on an issue? Did this change occur without good reason? Has that person’s view(s) evolved, or are trends / public opinions, at the time, factors? Were conflicting or hypocritical statements ever made? Is a candidate deliberately unclear or evasive?

- **go beyond sound bites.** Sound bites are selective quotes, catchy phrases – words which are partially presented and often taken out of context. A candidate might use sound bites to twist and misuse an opponent’s words in confusing, embarrassing, or publicly infuriating ways.

Try to track down the original and complete statements (speeches, audio / video, transcripts, etc.) so you can learn what was really said and draw your own conclusions.

- **dissect the talking points.** Talking points are words, labels, phrases, and arguments quoted repeatedly (often using the same words) by a candidate and/or that candidate’s supporters. Also watch for repeated claims and insults! This coordinated tactic can be used by political party members to help themselves “stay on message,” but it can also be used to reiterate something (factual or not) until people hear it often enough and tend to consider it true.

- **watch the numbers.** Don’t fall for deceptive digits or fearful figures pulled out of thin air. Consider who presents those numbers, what their sources are, when that information was created, and why. Is there any motive? Are the numbers up-to-date, authoritative, complete? How were they calculated?

- **form your own opinion.** Make your own informed decision based on where candidates (and their political parties) stand with respect to any issue important to you and your community.

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