

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

Middletown Thrall Library's Reference Department presents our

Election 2020 Survival Guide



**Inform Yourself
Before You Vote!**

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.

Consider visiting the **Media Watchdogs** area of our **Current Interests Center** (www.thrall.org/current) for **investigative journalists, news analysts, and fact checkers**.

- **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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