

Christian Political Expert: Do Your Homework Before the Election

Read Time: 6 Minutes 1 Second

Americans lack trust in all levels of government, from their local city council members on up.

We all know that bad actors are in the bunch, but you might be surprised to learn that there are honest, committed Christians who are politicians too! Honest candidates are running for office at every level of government, but we rarely see them because they often don't have as much money, so we rarely vote for them!

Good political engagement means voting. Every time. In every election! Next, it means that you as a voter must start treating elections more like job interviews instead of choosing candidates as you would a meal off of a fast-food menu. In many races, the ultimate decision is made in the primary (because the chances of someone winning from the other party in many districts is very unlikely), so it is vital to get involved in the primary races and the general election.

So how do you tell the candidates apart? How do you separate the good from the mediocre and the bad? If you are merely looking at surface information, you will likely not be able to do it. Unfortunately, a lot of people spend more time researching which car to buy than which person to vote for. That is why, so often, they wind up being disappointed and throw their hands up at the whole process!

The key to changing this is to do your homework—for every candidate, at every level, in the primary and general elections. Let's face it, people vote for who they know. Many

people will vote for the candidate they have heard of at the top of the ticket, and then as they move down the ballot and get to the names they don't know, they often don't vote. Many people base who they will vote for on who has the most signs, the best TV ads or the most billboards. In some cases, however, if you vote for the person with the most billboards, you may be voting for the person who is the least preferred candidate compared to the others!

If you are a busy mom or someone who can't devote a lot of time and energy to politics, then find others you trust who have studied each candidate. Find someone who can steer you in the right direction by giving you information to make an informed decision. One of the great things about being a Christian is having others in the body of Christ you can seek out for help.

Ways to Evaluate Candidates

Start with getting to know your candidate online. Likely, every candidate has a website that includes their biography and platform. You will find details about their experience, family, education, community involvement and career. If you unearth very few details about their life before candidacy, let that be a warning bell. Dig deeper.

Next, follow your candidate's social media platforms. Generally, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram will provide updates on issues and events faster and more comprehensively than a website. Want to know how a candidate is responding to a major news event? Check their posts to keep track of their statements. Social media accounts will also advertise your candidate's public appearances. Watch the videos they post. Do they use gimmicks and rhetoric to get your attention, or are they speaking from the heart and showing that they have substance and true values? Do their past actions match up with what they are saying? Most importantly, pull up their financial disclosure forms, and pay attention to who is

donating to their campaign. is a good place to start to find out if they are taking money from people or corporations that do not align with your values.

Most importantly, meet your candidate! It is also important to attend local events where your candidate is scheduled to appear. Invite your friends to go with you, even those who have not decided which candidate they will throw their support behind. These grassroots events are often held in church halls and coffee shops. The crowds are smaller in these locations, making it easier to meet your candidate one on one.

Attending a town hall event will allow you to put a question to your candidate and listen to how he or she handles difficult questions from other voters. Do they remain calm and polite, or do they dodge and weave or flare up with annoyance? How patient is your candidate when they respond? They will be asked the same questions repeatedly throughout their campaign, which means they should be prepared and patient. You have an opportunity to watch your candidate respond to opposition and judge for yourself how they function under pressure. How they act during campaign events and public appearances can indicate how they will deal with their constituency and staff once elected.

Not only are you learning about your candidate, but your presence at their events bolsters their optimism, encourages them to keep going and gets media attention by increasing crowd size.

So drop in at your candidate's campaign headquarters; the public is welcome at these locations. Meet the staff and others in your community who are supporting your candidate. Doing so will give you insight into the campaign's needs and ways you can be of support. If you like what you see, there will be volunteer opportunities, like making phone calls or putting up signs, with a commitment of as little as an hour or two a week.

But what if your candidate doesn't have a campaign headquarters? What does that mean? The candidate who has the most money and can afford a big fancy headquarters and billboards on every corner may not be the one who has your best interests at heart.

Sometimes the best candidate has very little money because they are not independently wealthy and refuse to take money from groups that will want to own them after they get elected. That means they are also the ones who may not have anywhere near as much purchased visibility. Quite possibly what they do have is exactly the right experience, heart and passion for serving their community. They may be a populist candidate, not a self-serving politician.

*The preceding is excerpted from **Terri Hasdorff's** book, "Running Into the Fire" (Charisma House, 2022). For more information or to order the book, please visit .*

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Terri Hasdorff is a former congressional candidate and an executive-level leader with over 20 years experience in government and politics. She began her career in 1991 in what is now called the White House Office of Public Engagement, where she had the honor of working with faith leaders from across the country. She later served on Capitol Hill for six years, then ran for a seat in the US House to represent Alabama's second congressional district. She has a bachelor's degree from Samford University, is a graduate of the senior executives program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and is currently in the executive MBA program at Oxford University.