Prep for the Polls
Intelligent resources for savvy voters

GENERAL
Definitions of Common Voting and Election Terms

Project Vote Smart*
Vote Smart’s mission is to provide “free, factual, unbiased information on candidates and elected officials...” Provides legislative demographic data such as funding, positions, speeches and voting records. www.votesmart.org

- You can create an account to track candidates/officials, receive notifications and important updates on topics of interest. Register any politician to receive daily emails with pertinent information about a candidate.
- On the home screen, after typing in a candidate, select them and then click Bio to display information. (The Track This Politician feature only works when you create an account.) You can also open Votes, Positions, Ratings, Speeches, and Funding.
- Clicking on the 🕒 sign opens ratings about false statements made by the politician. Vote Smart has partnered with Factcheck.org, Politifact and the Washington Post to reveal falsehoods shared by politicians. It also provides transcripts of events attended by the politician (debates, interviews, etc.). Use the drop down menus on left to select issue or speech type.
- Funding information is provided by Open Secrets.org (another resource on this handout).
- On the home screen, scroll down to open the Political Galaxy page. Search by politician or by zip code to instantly arrive at every fact related to that person on that issue.
- On the home screen, the Vote Easy option helps you align your political opinions with a candidate.

FACT CHECKING
Annenberg Political Fact Check
FactCheck.org is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. It is a nonpartisan, nonprofit “consumer advocate” for voters that monitors the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews and news releases. www.factcheck.org

- You can create an account for notifications.
- Browse the articles on the home page or click on MORE at the top of the screen and go to Party Lines.
This will share “...talking points, scripts for rank-and-file members to follow when discussing particular policy issues.” FactCheck analyzes them.

- Back on the home screen, open the 2020 Players Guide to learn about special interest groups funding 2020 elections.
- Again, back on the home screen, the Viral Spiral features a list of false or misleading rumors and a brief summary of the facts. This page also provides a link to a How to Spot Fake News article.
- Open the Articles tab at the top and then click on Debunking False Stories. FactCheck.org is working with Facebook to debunk misinformation shared on its site.

**PolitiFact**
This is a fact-checking website created by the Tampa Bay Times in 2007. In 2018, PolitiFact was acquired by the Poynter Institute, a nonprofit school for journalists. You can visit here for live fact checking of debates. You can sign up for newsletters. [www.politifact.com](http://www.politifact.com)

- Scrolling down the home screen, you will see various quotes and headlines. Next to each one is a “Truth-o-meter” gauge.
- Clicking on menu in upper left corner will offer a Florida site that will have its own Truth-o-meter.
- Again, click on the menu to open Media. This focuses on six of the most popular news pundits.

**FUNDING**
**Open Secrets**
Nonpartisan, independent and nonprofit, the Center for Responsive Politics is a research group that tracks political funding and its effect on elections and public policy. [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)

- Browse the home screen to view articles and topics like 2020 Special Elections, Dark Money and more.
• Go to **MENU** at the top of the home screen and then click on *Presidential*. On the next screen, click on *Financial Disclosures and Net Worth* on left side.

![OpenSecrets.org](https://s3.amazonaws.com/opensecrets-bucket/website/menu.png)

• Go to menu and click on *Personal Finances* to explore what lawmakers reported in personal financial disclosures through 2016.

• The **MENU** also offers info on *Influence & Lobbying*. Open that menu link to select Foreign Lobby Watch.

![menu.png](https://s3.amazonaws.com/opensecrets-bucket/website/influence.png)

• Another helpful resource is *The Top 10 Things Every Voter Should Know About Money-in-Politics* site. You can visit by clicking on **Resources** then by clicking on the link by the lightbulb.

**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS**

**ACLU Florida Legislative Scorecard**
The score reflects the number of identified civil liberties bills where the legislator voted in accordance with ACLU positions. The bills in the scorecard reflect the ACLU’s priority legislative areas: criminal justice reform, free speech (First Amendment) immigration, LGBTQ rights and reproductive rights. [https://aclufloridavoter.com/legislative-scorecard](https://aclufloridavoter.com/legislative-scorecard)

**American Conservative Union**
League of Women Voters of Florida
The non-partisan League does not endorse political candidates or parties but does take positions on policy issues including voting rights, natural resources, education, immigration and gun safety. https://www.lwvfl.org/issues/

National Environmental Scorecard

VOTING RECORDS
Congress.gov
Congress.gov is the official site for federal legislative information. It is presented by the Library of Congress (LOC) using data from the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, the Government Publishing Office, Congressional Budget Office, and the LOC’s Congressional Research Service. Congress.gov is usually updated the morning after a session adjourns. https://www.congress.gov/

C-Span*
Shows the outcome of all recorded votes on the U.S Senate and House floors plus text of bills. (Video footage) www.c-span.org/congress/votes/

Florida House of Representatives
Look up what your representative has sponsored and voted on. https://bit.ly/2OeRDCC
- Use the dropdown menus to browse bills and votes. Specify which chamber, House or Senate, to filter. This site also offers information on Florida Senate votes

Florida Senate
Look up specific bills to learn how your senator voted. https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bills/2020

Govtrack*
GovTrack.us is a project of Civic Impulse, LLC, an independent entity owned by its operator. It receives no funding in any form from outside organizations. It shows the outcome of all recorded votes on the U.S. Senate and House floors. It does not include votes in committee. Also, not all votes are recorded, such as when there is no one opposed. www.govtrack.us/congress/votes

- Click on TRACK VOTES to get emails.
- Use the search box in the upper right corner to type in a candidate’s name. A search for “Sanders” provides a short bio, political ideology analysis, list of bills sponsored and more, including Key Votes and Missed Votes:
• When you open a bill, the results will look like the image below and include a roll call:

![Roll Call Image]

Govtrack creates a report card on each U.S. Congress member, including how many absences they have had in a given year. GovTrack.us is a project of Civic Impulse, LLC, an independent entity that receives no funding from outside organizations. “We pay our operating costs through our advertising revenue...and crowdfunding.”

www.govtrack.us/congress/members

Head to Head: Compare Voting Records*

Compare the voting records of any two members of the U.S. Congress. Run by ProPublica, an independent newsroom led by some of the nation’s most distinguished editors.


• You can also see expenditures and search for lobbying firms

• FYI: The search box in the upper right corner is not effective when searching for legislators.
U.S. House of Representatives Roll Call
Roll call vote results are compiled by the House Tally Clerks under the direction of the Clerk of the House.  http://clerk.house.gov/legislative/legvotes.aspx

U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes
Roll call vote results are compiled through the Senate Legislative Information System by the Senate Bill Clerk under the direction of the Secretary of the Senate.  https://bit.ly/2kIRScB

*Recommended by congress.gov.

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