

Prep for the Polls

Intelligent resources for savvy voters




GENERAL

Definitions of Common Voting and Election Terms

From USA.gov, administered by a division of the U.S. General Services Administration's Technology Transformation Service. www.usa.gov/voting-and-election-definitions

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.

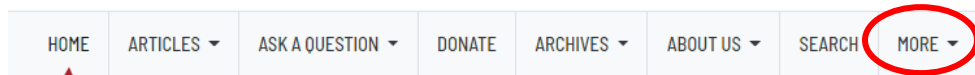
FACT CHECKING

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

- 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.

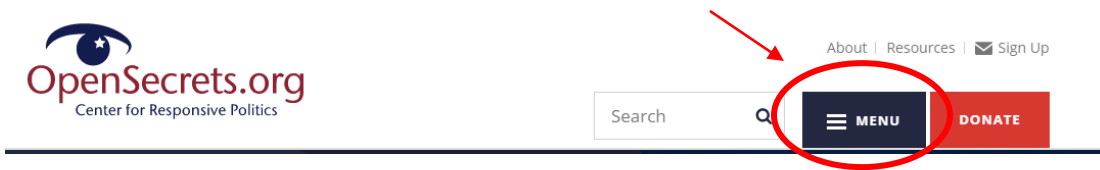
FUNDING

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

- Browse the home screen to view articles and topics like *2020 Special Elections*, *Dark Money* and more.

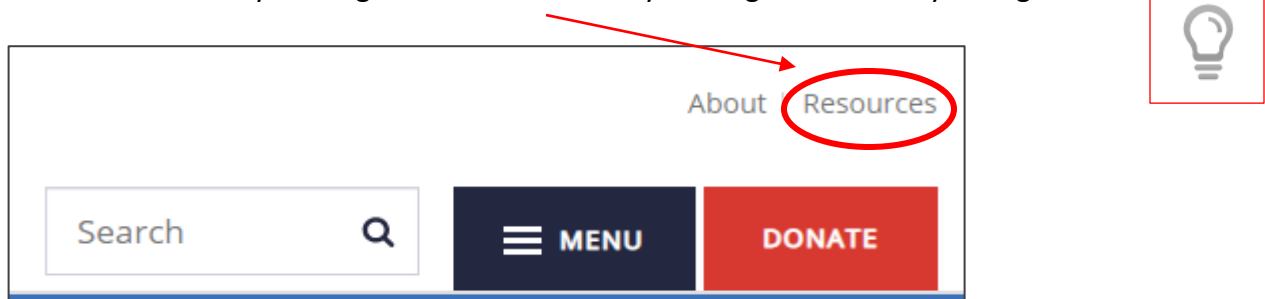
- Go to **MENU** at the top of the home screen and then click on *Presidential*. On the next screen, click on *Financial Disclosures and Net Worth* on left side.



- 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**.



- 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>

American Conservative Union

The ACU presents an Annual Rating of Congress for the years 2011 – 2018.

<http://acuratings.conservative.org/>

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

The League of Conservation Voters tallies U.S. House of Representatives and Senate votes on certain issues. <http://scorecard.lcv.org/>

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:

Voting Record

Key Votes

Sanders voted **Yea**

H.J. Res. 31: Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 Conference Report Agreed to 83/16 on Feb 14, 2019.
This bill, in its final form, funded the parts of the federal government whose funding was to lapse on February 15, 2019. On December 22, ...

Sanders voted **Not Voting**

H.R. 5325: Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2017
Bill Passed 72/26 on Sep 28, 2016.
The Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017, and Zira Response and Preparedness Act (H.R. 5325) is an appropriations ...

Sanders voted **Nay**

H.J. Res. 124 (113th): Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2015
Joint Resolution Passed 78/22 on Sep 18, 2014.

Sanders voted **Nay**

On the Nomination PH1342: Stanley Fischer, of New York, to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the ...
Nomination Confirmed 63/24 on Jun 12, 2014.

Sanders voted **Nay**

On the Nomination PH1350: Jerome H. Powell, of Maryland, to be a Member of the Board of Governors of the ...
Nomination Confirmed 67/24 on Jun 12, 2014.

Sanders voted **Nay**

H.R. 3304 (113th): National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014
Motion Agreed to 84/15 on Dec 19, 2013.

Missed Votes

From Jan 2007 to Feb 2020, Sanders missed 532 of 4,086 roll call votes, which is 13.0%. This is much worse than the median of 1.4% among the lifetime records of senators currently serving. The chart below reports missed votes over time.

We don't track why legislators miss votes, but it's often due to medical absences and major life events. Legislators running for president or vice president typically miss votes while on the campaign trail – that's normal. See our [analysis of presidential candidates' missed votes](#).

- When you open a bill, the results will look like the image below and include a roll call:

H.R. 2546: Protecting America's Wilderness Act
Feb 12, 2020 at 4:59 p.m. ET. On Passage of the Bill in the House.

This was a vote to pass [H.R. 2546](#) in the House.

Totals

	All Votes	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Yea	56% 231	225	6	0
Nay	44% 183	0	182	1
Not Voting	15	6	9	0

Passed. Simple Majority Required. Source: [house.gov](https://www.house.gov).

Ideology Vote Chart

Key: Democrat - Yes, Republican - Yes, Republican - Nay

Seat position based on our [ideology score](#).

Cartogram Map

Each hexagon represents one congressional district. Solid hexes are Yea votes.

- 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.

<https://bit.ly/2A3Bzeh>

- 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.*

CONTACT US

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