

# Information Matters: Future Thinking

As you prepare to vote, it's important to consider that elections are fundamentally about the future. When we choose our representatives, we're not just selecting people to manage the present; we're choosing leaders who will help shape the future. In essence, the government we elect today will serve as the architect of the society we all hope to live in tomorrow.

To say that elections are about the future is not to say that the present and past don't matter. They do. However, if they matter, it's primarily because of what we think they can tell us about what is possible or maybe even likely to happen in the future. In this sense, we can say that they matter in an **instrumental** way.

For example, the present and past can help us determine whether campaign promises are realistic and whether the people making them are worthy of our trust. A careful examination of what has been promised and delivered on (or not delivered on) in the past can help us assess how realistic candidates' proposals are and how effective they are likely to be in realizing them in the future. Similarly, by acquainting ourselves with candidates' past and present behaviors, we can more confidently anticipate how they will likely behave in the future.

Because elections are principally about the future, it's important to resist the temptation to get swept up in day-to-day campaign developments. This may seem counterintuitive but remember that the media often emphasizes these near-term stories not because they particularly matter, but because they are new, sensational, and therefore suit their own business model. Looked at objectively, however, such reports typically provide little substantive information about the candidates and their visions. The result? When we treat

these stories as vital news it is important to stay on top of, we risk exhausting ourselves and losing sight of what truly matters.

Engaging with the news in this future-focused way makes sense, particularly in a voting context. The leaders we elect today will need to tackle current issues like public safety, economic stability, and social welfare. But they will also need to have the vision and ability to work toward a future that aligns with our shared values and goals. This will mean creating policies that foster long-term growth, sustainability, justice, and innovation. Whether it's through investing in education, infrastructure, healthcare, or the environment, your vote is helping to decide who will guide us toward a more equitable and prosperous future.

As you consider your options, listen especially closely for those ideas and proposals that seem to lay out the candidates' visions for the future. Ask yourself to what extent their visions—and the values supporting them—align with your own. And, to ensure these visions are workable, pay special attention to the steps they propose taking to begin building from the present to the future they are putting forward. Do the plans seem realistic? Working from what the candidate says, can you easily trace how we get from the present to the future? Look for specifics because without details their proposals risk turning to dust whether or not they are ultimately elected.