How Do We Make Wise Choices? A BetweenCitizens Guide.

This set of forms was drafted by a group of citizens of different backgrounds and political perspectives, who started discussing these issues as part of a class of "Systems and Citizens" at the University of Missouri Osher Institute in Spring of 2018. One thing that helped us better understand and begin to discuss difficult questions was thinking about questions that would help us explore the underlying intersections of information, values, and interests that underlie many of these issues.

In our own discussions we agreed on several things about our current political system - First, the narrow and highly partisan focus on specific policy issues often deflects attention and energy away from issues we want to discuss, like "what kind of country do we want to be?", or "how can we help each other?" Second, character really does count in our leaders. Third, data and facts are both important in understanding an issue yet often in and of themselves don't provide the answers. Finding pragmatic solutions that will help us to move forward will require dialogue on values, interests, time frames, and other factors.

We also agreed, in the words of one of our members, "We can scream all day long but that doesn't help and it doesn't feel good either." So we put together the following three forms to help us better to

● 	understand the issues before us;
● 	evaluate the data, the options, the candidates, and the systems we use for governing; and
● 	choose how to proceed.

Our purpose in offering these forms is to help all of us us make wise decisions, both individually and together.

So we present for your input and discussion, the following three forms:

● 	What should I look for in a candidate? (a suggested list of attributes).
● 	Questions to ask (Question generator)
● 	Policy/Issue Worksheet

What Should I look for in a candidate?

Individual character and integrity do make a difference in governing. We suggest all candidates should be evaluated on the following traits, regardless of party affiliation or proposed policies.

● Is this candidate **transparent?**	● Transparency - the willingness to be honest with others and to be held accountable for one's decisions, is a key factor in integrity. A candidate who is transparent will be willing to discuss potential monitoring, evaluation, and sharing of policy outcomes.
● Is this candidate **pragmatic** and willing to solve problems in a practical way?	● Is the candidate willing to take small steps forward to help solve an issue or does the candidate simply parrot broad positions without discussing practical realities?
● Is this candidate concerned about the **common good** and do they demonstrate compassion for others**?**	● We believe that <u>all</u> Americans matter and that <u>all</u> people are deserving of respect. As the old saying goes "United we stand, divided we fall.". Does this candidate demonstrate respect or does this candidate use "us v. them" phrasing, insults, sarcasm or derision when talking about others?
● Is this candidate **willing to listen and learn** from others?	● Is this candidate willing to interact directly with citizens through public meetings? Does this candidate regularly share updates and information on developing policies and seek and respond to input received? Is this candidate willing to consider scientific data when relevant? Can this candidate explain the pros and cons of different policy options in a coherent manner? Is this candidate willing to track outcomes and make amendments as needed?
● Does this candidate demonstrate sincerity?	● Does this candidate's positions reflect a coherent and consistent set of values (moral or ethical)? Or is this candidate willing to "change the rules" depending on which party is in power?

QUESTIONS TO ASK WORKSHEET

Many of the issues discussed by the candidates are complex and confusing, and it can be hard to know where to start a discussion. These questions helped us through several difficult issues and conversations. As you listen to the answers given you can ask yourself - "how do these views align with the type of community, country, or world I want to live in?"

How do you **define** _____?
Example(s): *What do you mean by "us"? "Citizens"? All "Americans"?*

What are you **proposing** on [issue]? **Why**?
Follow-up questions: What do you expect will happen? How will that be tracked? How will you inform us on effects, intended and unintended? What will you do if that does not happen?

What **values** and other factors drive that position? Who will benefit? Who might be harmed? What might we do to help all or more of us?
More generally: What would you say are the three to five core values that drive your thinking. Please define those.

What do you believe is the role of government in our society? What responsibilities, if any, do you believe citizens have to their government and to each other?
Follow-up questions: Where do you believe government is acting within that role? Outside that role? How does your proposed policy align with that role? How do you believe that role is being fulfilled? Is it being fulfilled?

What **data** or information are you relying on? What are you willing to share or consider?
Follow-up questions: What issues intersect and what has been done to evaluate potential "unintended consequences." From your perspective, what are those potential "unintended consequences"? How would you monitor or adjust if those occurred? What data indicates that this policy would make a positive difference? Are you willing to track and report back data on whether that is occurring?

[**Transparency**] Who is funding your campaign? What groups are supporting your campaign or your position on issues? What information is available on those groups? What overlap is there in terms of past or present campaign staff and your organization? Have you signed any pledges or otherwise made commitments that would constrain your independence? Who (individuals or groups) did you consult in developing proposals?

ISSUE WORKSHEET

IDENTIFY THE ISSUE
1. The issue I am thinking about is _____.
2. The candidate's proposals are:

GATHER YOUR THOUGHTS
1. I am concerned about this because:
2. This affects my family and friends in the following ways:
3. Things that I think would help are:
4. Things I worry about are:
5. Things I think are going well in this area are:

THINK ABOUT LANGUAGE
1. What are key words and phrases that are being used by the candidates in discussing this issue?
2. Which do I like? Why?
3. Which upset me? Why?
4. Do I understand how each term is being used? What would the candidate say if I asked for a definition? How do I think it should be defined?

THINK ABOUT INFORMATION
1. What information do I have on this issue? What other sources are there? What information are we missing? How might we gain more information?
2. What types of information are the candidates relying on?
3. If personal stories, what other stories are out there that are not being discussed? Are we getting the full story?
4. If data or statistics, is the candidate clear about the source? Do I know the context in which the data was gathered or how it was compiled? Is there other data out there which the candidate refuses to acknowledge or discuss? What is the context for that data?
5. What do the various fact checking sites say about the candidates' statements on these issues?

THINK ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS
1. What groups or individuals have an interest/concern about this issue?
2. Do the concerns/interests of these groups or individuals meet at any point? Is there a shared common ground?

3. What efforts have been made to engage with different groups or individuals and to understand their concerns?
4. What groups or types of people are/will be actively consulted, or engaged with, or acknowledged or does the candidate employ "us v. them" phrasing? How many different ways does this candidate attempt to engage directly with voters? What evidence is there that that input is valued and taken into consideration?

5. Did this policy or proposal respond to a direct concern raised by constituents, or is it a party position or drafted by a special interest group?
6. Is the candidate willing to be transparent about their relationships, supporters, pledges taken, etc.?
7. What does the candidate do to maintain good relations with all interested parties - especially those who may disagree?
8. Does the candidate avoid using, and is the candidate willing to speak up against behaviors that are destructive to relationships (scapegoating, stereotyping, derision, etc.)?

THINK ABOUT INTERESTS
1. Who will benefit from the policy being proposed? Over what time frame?
2. Who will be harmed? Over what time frame?
3. Can anything be done to meet all interests, at least in part? Or to avoid or minimize harm? Why or why not?
4. What else was considered and why were those options not chosen?

THINK ABOUT "FAIRNESS" AND OTHER VALUES
1. Might this policy unfairly advantage one group over another?
2. If so, how so?
3. How do you define fair? Are there principles or standards that you would apply to determine what is fair regardless of party? What are they?

THINK ABOUT THE REAL WORLD
1. How will this policy be adopted?
2. If adopted, how might you expect it to be implemented? Why do you think it will work that way? How will we monitor?
3. Will the candidate be in control or will others need to be involved or be in charge?
4. Does what is being discussed fit with my understanding of how the world works?