

Democracy Online Survey (December 6, 1999)

Executive Summary

- Close to one-third of attentive voters have used the Internet to learn more about political candidates, and about a quarter of all online voters have used the Internet for candidate information.
- The online public is interested in finding information on the Internet about candidates at all levels.
- Three-quarters of people find the information about candidates and campaigns on the Internet to be accurate. Two-thirds trust the information they find about candidates and campaigns. Attentive voters are more likely to find the information to be accurate and trustworthy.
- The online public wants more information on the Internet about candidates' issues positions and voting records. They want to use the Internet to get information to solve community problems such as street repairs and to get more information about government programs. They are also interested in information about registration procedures, candidate biographies, and ballot initiatives.
- Voters want political information from neutral sources. Sponsorship by churches and the state board of elections add the most credibility. Such neutral sources indicate online voters turn to the Internet for spin-free political information. News organizations, civic organizations, and community organizations are a second tier. Online voters are considerably less interested in information from candidates, parties, issue organizations and on-line providers.
- Following the Democracy Online Project's "Best Practices" will increase the credibility of a political campaign website, particularly documenting positions (such as providing official voting records, providing background documentation for all information on the site, and providing official voting records). The Best Practices are also personally important to online voters. Additionally, a directory of all official websites would add credibility to campaign sites and is personally most important to the online public.