

A Thinking Voter's Guide

Compiled By Terry Paulson, PhD

You're a Republican! The Political Conversation Your Mother Told You Never to Have

Make a Thoughtful Decision when You Vote: None of the short political commercials from either political party do justice to the issues we face as a state or country. The media and political ads often seem preoccupied with negatives and provocative sound bytes. This guide is designed to help you think through your voting decision on the basis of issues that are important to you. The twenty-two issues identified will help isolate the voting tendencies of the Republican and Democratic parties. It is our collective responsibility to make thoughtful choices in any election. I hope this guide helps you do that. It is expansive enough to include core principles and most of the critical issues of the day that ought to be considered. The test scoring also allows you to individualize the test to give more weight to the issues that are most important to you in making your voting decision.

The Truth Is in the Tension Between the Parties: I hope you agree that most of the citizens on both sides of our political divide care about our country. There are extreme members of both parties who are embarrassments to members in their respective groups. While both parties care about the future of this country, there are major differences as to the best way to achieve that future. In each issue isolated, I have tried to identify the general tendency of each party in as unemotional and specific way as I can. On each issue, check the party that most reflects your opinion. It is rare that you will support any one party on all issues, so try to be honest with yourself in scoring each issue.

Individualize Your Issue Weighting: As with any decision, you bring a unique set of priorities to your choice of how to vote. In each of the twenty-two issues, you will be asked to identify the position you most identify with. Totaling your Democrat and Republican position votes should help you determine your vote selection in November.

Certainly, some issues are more important to you than others in any given election. In addition, some issues are not important to you at all. To adjust for that difference in an issue's level of importance, at the end of the test you can increase the weight of your *most important issue* to **three points**. You can increase the weight of up to *three additional important issues* by giving those issues an increased weighting of **two points**. To account for the fact that some issues are not important to you at all, you can **cross off up to three issues** to discount their significance in making your decision. ***Wait to the end after reviewing all issues to make those decisions and then add up your total vote preference scores to help determine your election priorities and vote.***

The Issues that Count...

1. Government Size and Intervention:

___ **Democrat:** While wanting to curtail waste, fraud and abuse, government intervention is still critical in meeting the needs of our complex society. The obstacles and challenges faced by some American individuals and businesses today are too difficult for them to face on their own or with the help of local charities or their extended families. The federal and state governments must remain active in developing programs and funding agencies to meet those expanding critical needs.

___ **Republican:** Government should be limited to critical Constitutional roles that people cannot do for themselves. Politicians should work to keep more money in the pockets of American citizens by reducing the size and scope of government, by ending unnecessary programs and avoiding starting new ones. Work to keep the power and resources close to the people through their local governments rather than through a centralized and distant state or federal government.

2. Government Regulations:

___ **Democrat:** One of the principle functions of government should be to regulate and control the actions and performance of corporations, organizations and individuals who can impact the environment, health, or safety of our citizens. The rules, forms and controls generated are a cost that businesses and individuals are obligated to fulfill to protect citizens from hazards and the environment from abuse.

___ **Republican:** The free-enterprise system with minimal controls is a positive force for creating economic growth, more jobs, and personal wealth for its citizens. Some government regulations and controls are necessary but should be limited to high-priority, documented hazards. The emphasis should be on enforcing accountability for the rules and controls that are in force. Extensive regulations and paperwork increase costs, make it hard for businesses to compete, and make states less attractive for needed business investment.

3. Social Services or Self-Reliance:

___ **Democrat:** Entitlement reform, while necessary, must not cut back services for those in need. True caring is expressed in government programs that can allocate more resources for people unable to cope with the demands of our society. As a wealthy, industrialized society, our government should be more involved in providing funds and programs that ensure the health and happiness of the less fortunate. Private charity cannot meet the needs without strong government involvement and funds. Self-reliance is not for everyone; it takes a village.

___ **Republican:** True caring is best measured by how many people no longer need government programs and are self-sufficient instead of by how many are served by government aid. Progress has been made in getting people off welfare and back into living productive lives. Care enough to provide a safety net that temporarily assists those in need without allowing the net to become a dependency trap for those who are capable of working. Private charity is more efficient and can be more effective when

coupled with some government support. Self-reliance is a critical American value; people need a hand up more than a handout.

4. Crime Policy:

___ **Democrat:** Because of the unfair application of the justice system, strong discretion is needed for judges to establish fair sentencing. Punishment should be applied, but rehabilitation should be as important as punishment. Capital punishment should be minimized if not stopped. Controls on the police must be established to ensure fair treatment of all, an end to racial profiling, and strong punishment for hate crimes. More money should be spent on programs to prevent crime than on constructing more prisons.

___ **Republican:** Because of the tendency of the legal system to err on the side of leniency, strong guidelines such as “the Three Strikes Law” should remain in place to ensure accountability and punishment for crimes. Capital punishment ought to be rare but should be upheld in first-degree murder cases. Accountability over rehabilitation should be stressed. The rights of the victims should be as important as protecting criminals. An investment in adequate prisons and police force are wise investments.

5. Tort Reforms:

___ **Democrat:** The rights of individuals and groups to sue in order to right wrongs must be expanded beyond the current limits. By increasing pain and suffering judgments, judges and juries will be able to send a strong message to irresponsible companies that unethical and illegal behavior will not be tolerated. To require the loser to pay legal costs or to limit judgments is to tip the scales in the favor of the rich and corporations at the expense of those who are least able to defend themselves.

___ **Republican:** Individuals and groups should have the right to sue, but the growing use of frivolous lawsuits is costing all Americans and is making a lottery out of our courts. “Victim thinking” has been taken to an extreme and pain and suffering limits must be maintained. “Loser pay” provisions, limits on *pain and suffering* judgments, and limits on the share of judgments going to lawyers should be considered in future tort reforms.

6. Education Policy:

___ **Democrat:** More funds are needed to invest in our classrooms. Funding is needed to provide additional teachers and to give our public schools what they need to improve the educational excellence of our youth. Charter schools and standard testing will help achieve this. A separation of church and state must be maintained in our schools. Publicly funded vouchers should not be used to pay for students at private schools, because it takes funds away from public schools. Home schooling should have more controls to ensure the quality of instruction.

___ **Republican:** Educational excellence is a core priority. Our public education system is not producing results. Our youth “feel” more competent but consistently perform at low levels of achievement compared to other industrial countries. A strong education system that works is very important to the future of our country. Local schools should be given more control; vouchers should be given a chance to prove themselves where

states choose to experiment; and home schooling and more parent choice should be supported wherever possible.

7. Tax Policy:

___ **Democrat:** Fairness must take into account that those who are able to pay should pay significantly more than others. Because of the rewards our society affords the successful achievers, they should be expected to shoulder more of the costs to sustain the government that maintains that opportunity. To make a flatter system or provide an across-the-board tax cut for all levels would unfairly benefit primarily the rich. Because of the wealth of the rich citizens, it is not unfair to have 10% of American workers paying 60% of the income tax bill. Surpluses should be used to pay down the debt and help fund new, needed programs.

___ **Republican:** No matter what form tax relief or reforms take, taxes should be minimized to the lowest appropriate level possible in order to maintain work and entrepreneurial incentives, minimize unnecessary government growth and waste, and stimulate the dynamic growth of our economy. During difficult economic times, tax cuts stimulate the economy and the business growth that keeps economies growing. Where possible, tax rates should be flatter and tax regulations simpler. All but the poorest Americans should pay some of the tax load.

8. Military Support and Homeland Security:

___ **Democrat:** While a strong military and a secure homeland are both important, we must put an even stronger emphasis on diplomacy, restraint and U.N. cooperation. We should resist deployment of troops and bring our troops home as soon as possible. The best defense is expanded commerce with shared technology and mutual interests. Sustaining a strong military is important, but that investment in military expenditures must not stop the government from funding needed homeland security, domestic programs and social services.

___ **Republican:** In a world with more rogue countries and terrorist groups capable of attacking our homeland, America must invest adequate resource to remain strong, progressive, and technologically sophisticated. We must continue to walk softly but continue to carry a big, technologically-advanced stick that is positioned to deal with new, smaller engagements wherever necessary. The new realities in a free world open to terrorism, make investing in homeland security and our military a necessary and expensive priority we must fund to stay safe.

9. What Special Interests Do You Most Support:

___ **Democrat:** I am comfortable aligning myself and my campaign contributions with the interests and values associated with the following politically active special interest groups: The trial lawyers, the NEA (the teachers union), the entertainment industry, and unions in general.

___ **Republican:** I am comfortable aligning myself and my campaign contributions with the interests and values associated with the following politically active special interest groups: Large business, small business, conservative Christian groups, and the NRA (National Rifle Association).

10. The Environment and Energy Policy:

___ **Democrat:** Strong action is needed now to protect future generations from the effects of unchecked business interests and global warming. Limitations now are a small price to pay for a future for our children and the many endangered species. The scientific data is conclusive enough to warrant new regulations and limitations on American businesses and oil and coal exploration and development. Continue to invest in alternative energy. Aggressively regulate, catch, and punish environmental abusers.

___ **Republican:** There is no consistent or conclusive evidence of global warming any more than there was evidence of the global cooling and the ice age predicted in the 70s. We must be good stewards of the environment without making radical unsubstantiated interventions. Extreme regulations and environmental limits make us less competitive globally and lose jobs. Work to incentivize and expand domestic energy sources, oil, natural gas, coal, and alternative energy to decrease foreign energy dependence.

11. Separation of Church and State:

___ **Democrat:** The separation of church and state is a firm value that must be maintained at all levels of government. There should be less display of religious conviction or holidays of any sort in schools or on government property. Personal faith is important but should be separated from any kind of public support. No government or voucher funds should be used in religious schools. Religious institutions receiving government funds should have to comply with all federal requirements even if they go against their religious convictions.

___ **Republican:** Religious faith has been a cornerstone for the values and moral compass that helps sustain our country. We must not institutionalize any one religion, but we must ensure that freedom “of” religion should never become freedom “from” religion. Separation of church and state is not meant to limit reference to God or to stop the free exercise of religious faith by a minority or a majority believer. Vouchers and public support for certified religious schools and service providers should be allowed.

12. Affirmative Action:

___ **Democrat:** Societal bias and wrongs still exist to the extent that additional support for minorities is warranted. Race, gender and sexual preference regulations should be sustained to make sure that more minorities are hired and more minority students are selected by college programs.

___ **Republican:** Rigorously defend existing civil rights laws but put an end to quota preference systems on the basis of race, gender, or sexual preference. Such distinctions ought to be irrelevant. Affirmative action support needs to be reframed to allow support of any citizen on the basis of need. Rewards, opportunities, and jobs should be earned on the basis of achievement.

13. Hate Crime Legislation:

___ **Democrat:** To ensure the protection of rights for minority groups, some crimes, attacks and murders against minority group members are so heinous that the federal government should be allowed to intervene to ensure prosecution. A hateful murder or crime against a minority member is dangerous to our society’s values and warrants additional punishment.

___ **Republican:** To single out crimes against any one group for increased prosecution is not wise. Equal protection under the law is an important value that must be maintained. Rather than single out “hate” crimes, we should work to ensure that all crimes are punished strongly. Adequate laws exist; the will to punish strongly must be maintained no matter who the victim or the perpetrator is.

14. Gay Rights:

___ **Democrat:** Because gays are an abused minority in America, we should work to provide civil rights protection and equal status for same-sex marriages including the right to adopt children. Efforts should be made to develop and promote early-childhood interventions that promote tolerance and acceptance of gay relationships and lifestyles.

___ **Republican:** Gay citizens should be afforded equal protection under the law but deserve no special civil rights protection. No special training should be provided in the schools that promotes acceptance of a gay lifestyle; tolerance should promote civility not acceptance of any one agenda. Marriage should be affirmed as a union between a man and a woman. Civil unions between gay citizens should be a state-rights issue.

15. Social Security Reforms:

___ **Democrat:** Changing the Social Security plan is not fair to retirees. Recent task-force suggestions to consider investment funds, lower cost-of-living calculations, and changes in support are too risky. A small increase in payroll tax payments and means-tested limits in benefits for wealthier Americans would generate additional funds to be invested to secure future Social Security payments and longer program viability.

___ **Republican:** As more baby boomers retire and fewer available to support, Social Security must be changed to remain viable. Proposed plans should preserve the existing plan for those over 55 and provide younger workers an opportunity to invest up to 1/3 of their payroll taxes in personal retirement plans similar to the Thrift Saving Plans available to federal employees. Plan assets should be able to be passed to their heirs.

16. Immigration Policy:

___ **Democrat:** The tradition of America is strongly supportive of being a welcoming country for immigrants. Any response to illegal immigration should be limited to making entry difficult and enforcing existing laws on employers who hire illegal immigrants. Once here and contributing, even illegal aliens should be provided a difficult but achievable path to full American citizenship.

___ **Republican:** The tradition of America is strongly supportive of being a welcoming country for immigrants. Those who arrive here legally and work to earn their citizenship should be embraced as part of the rich American mosaic. Dealing with illegal immigration starts with a secure border and swift deportation for those caught. Any guest worker program or path to citizenship for illegal immigrants should be limited. English-first education focus should be used to help all immigrants learn our language.

17. Minimum Wage:

___ **Democrat:** The great American economy is not getting the rewards down to the poor working Americans. We need to increase the minimum wage to a higher level to allow the poorest Americans to take care of their basic needs.. The gap between the

have's and the *have-not's* must be addressed through government policy and intervention.

___ **Republican:** Increasing the minimum wage, while providing short-term reward for those whose bosses can afford to pay it, will also cause some companies to go under and some workers to lose jobs. Most minimum wage employees do not stay in that job. Low pay, entry-level jobs allow workers to prove their worth, learn new skills, and then earn their way to jobs that pay more. Getting beyond minimum wage jobs is one incentive to keep improving and learning.

18. Healthcare Reform:

___ **Democrat:** There are too many Americans who are falling through the cracks in healthcare coverage. The Affordable Care Act is a good start in addressing the inadequacies of healthcare coverage and extending care to more citizens who have no coverage. The efficiencies of scale and the scope of the problem warrant federal remedies and we should work towards balancing some choice with universal coverage for every American.

___ **Republican:** Any form of socialized medicine should be resisted or at least minimized. Empower patients, not businesses or governments, to have control of their healthcare options. Expand open competition between viable healthcare options. Encourage tax-free medical savings accounts and major-medical plans. Give citizens the healthcare options that our politicians and government employees have the right to exercise.

19. Abortion:

___ **Democrat:** Sustain our current abortion policy that emphasizes the woman's right to choose an abortion with minimal restrictions. We should be proud of the fact that in industrialized countries, only Japan has a more unrestricted abortion policy than the United States. Serious limits should be placed on Pro-Life demonstrations close to abortion clinics. The banning of late-term abortions is a step in the wrong direction.

___ **Republican:** Basic abortion rights should be a states' rights issue. A fetus may not yet be a baby, but it is more than a mass of tissue. Some limits on abortion, like the ban on late-term, partial-birth abortions and parental notification, are needed to make abortions rarer. Pro-Life demonstrators should be allowed the same rights of expression any other American is allowed.

20. Gun Control:

___ **Democrat:** Continue to make it more difficult for citizens to buy guns by retail and at gun shows without adequate checks or delays. Increase the pressure to ban the sale of automatic and semi-automatic weapons. Hold gun manufacturers responsible for increasing the safety of guns. Pass more laws restricting gun purchase and possession. Work with the U.N. to bring the U.S. gun laws into alignment with other developed nations.

___ **Republican:** Resist any major change in gun laws beyond more efficient and immediate checking for criminal records. The right to bear arms is a Constitutional right that should be protected. Guns don't kill people; people kill people. Support gun safety

and strong penalties for criminal use. Enforce existing laws restricting gun purchase and possession. Resist any U.N. sponsored agreements to limit gun ownership.

21. Foreign Aid and Agreements:

___ **Democrat:** As the only super power left, the U.S. has a unique responsibility to support and help fund the U.N. and developing nations. Foreign aid is critical in maintaining diplomacy, supporting our allies, and in keeping developing countries inclined to work with our interests. As a responsible world power, it is our responsibility to work to influence and cooperate with the U.N, the World Court and the World Bank.

___ **Republican:** As the only super power left, the U.S. has a unique responsibility to remain active in the U.N. but to target our funding to programs and agencies we support. Foreign aid should be used sparingly and primarily in support of our allies and our diplomatic interests. Support for developing countries should be time-limited and subject to review. No agreement with the U.N., the World Court and the World Bank should ever supersede our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

22. Supreme Court Appointments:

___ **Democrat:** Our Constitution and Bill of Rights are critical to our future. Judges need to be appointed who understand that our Constitution must adjust to the times. The constitutional framers specifically wrote the Constitution in broad and flexible terms to create a dynamic, "living" document that can adjust as our culture and global realities evolve. We need judges with strong legal experience like Justices Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor, Stephen Breyer, and Ruth Bader Ginsberg who will judiciously rule on the cases that come before the court.

___ **Republican:** Our Constitution and Bill of Rights are critical to our future. Strict constructionist judges must be appointed to ensure that our core freedoms and rights are maintained. Judicial activism should be resisted. The justices are not to create, amend or repeal laws but only to uphold or reject cases based on the original meaning or intent of our Constitution. The amendment process should be used to change the Constitution. We need judges with strong legal experience like Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and John Roberts and who will judiciously rule on the cases that come before the court.

©2012 This test is from the ebook, *You're a Republican! The Political Conversation Your Mother Told You Never to Have* by Terry Paulson, PhD. Consider this statement permission to duplicate and share this test with others. An online copy is available at <http://www.unitedwecanwin.com>. Contact Dr. Terry Paulson at terry@terrypaulson.com.

Determine Your Voter's Guide Score

Make one issue your top priority and score that issue **3 points**.

Make up to three others important by scoring them **2 points each**.

Cross off up to three issues because they are not important to you. **Do not count them.**

Give 1 point to each remaining issue.

Add Up Party Points:

Democratic Issue Points: _____

Republican Issue Points: _____

Voting Team or Individuals: In most cases discerning American citizens learn to vote for any candidate from the political team that most effectively stands for the principles, values, and positions that best matches their own views. A winning President will use his/her network database and party resources to appoint skilled and like-minded politicians and the judges, leaders, and professionals he or she will appoint to key positions. In Congress, the party in power has committee control to increase their influence. But in a given race, the personal, ethical and/or illegal actions of a given candidate can so concern you that you will choose in isolated situations to vote against your voting tendencies.

Now VOTE!

This country is not run by polls but by the voters that show up! As an informed citizen, do your part by taking the time to vote in the coming and show up and vote this election...