

Founding Board

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Fmr U.S. Senator

Barry Goldwater
U.S. Senator

Geraldine Ferraro
Fmr U.S. Representative

Michael Dukakis
Former Governor

Bill Frist
U.S. Senator

Bill Frenzel
Fmr U.S. Representative

Peggy Lampl
Fmr Executive Director, League of Women Voters

Jim Leach
U.S. Representative

John Sununu
U.S. Senator

Charles Mathias
Fmr U.S. Senator

Edward Brooke
Fmr U.S. Senator

Barbara Lee
U.S. Representative

Claudine Schneider
Fmr U.S. Representative

Kenneth Adelman
Dir., US Arms Ctrl & Disarmament Agency, Reagan Admin.

Chaka Fattah
U.S. Representative

Jon Trachta
Attorney

Marvin Cohen
Fmr FAA Chair, Civil Aeronautical Board, Carter Admin.

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U.S. Representative

Irene Natividad
Fmr Pres., National Women's Political Caucus

Pat Schroeder
Fmr U.S. Representative

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Attorney

Adelaide Elm
Historian

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Fmr Exec. Dir., Nat'l Coalition on Black Voter Participation

Marianne Jennings
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Brent Steel
Political Scientist

Kyle Dell
Political Scientist

John Echohawk
Native American Rights Fund

Henry Kenski
Political Scientist

Richard Kimball
President, Project Vote Smart



PROJECT VOTE SMART

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Fourty-two Percent of Maryland Candidates Fail Political Courage Test

Great Divide Ranch, MT—Project Vote Smart released the 2008 Maryland Political Courage Test results today for the Maryland general election candidates. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the state's candidates for U.S. House were willing to reveal their positions on the issues that are of top concern to Maryland voters through the Political Courage Test. The Test covers such issues as school funding, environment and energy, health care, immigration, and international issues.

A ten year study of candidates' willingness to expose their positions on the issues was completed in 2006 at the conclusion of Project Vote Smart's National Political Awareness Test. The study revealed that since 1996 when 72% of congressional candidates were willing to answer issue questions, they have become less and less likely to expose their positions through the Test, with a national average of only 48% for the 2006 election cycle. Moreover, in 2006, only 26% of incumbents responded to the Test. Maryland has shown a small resurgence from the 2006 cycle when only 45% of candidates returned the test, but has fallen sixteen percentage points from it's high in the 1996 election cycle.

The Political Courage Test asks all candidates one central question: "Are you willing to tell citizens your positions on the issues you will most likely face on their behalf?" Candidates who reply "yes" to that question are presented with several issue categories in which they are asked to indicate support for given principles or reply using their own language entirely. In addition, candidates may leave up to 30% of the issue areas blank.

The Political Courage Test is just a one of several resources available to the people on Project Vote Smart's website- Votesmart.org. Also available are: campaign finance data, biographical information, voting records, special interest groups' ratings, candidate speeches and public statements, and contact information on close to 40,000 candidates and elected officials at the presidential, congressional, gubernatorial, state legislative and local levels.

Since 2000, Project Vote Smart has found that party leaders and consultants from both major parties are advising candidates not to respond to the Test for two primary reasons: it will limit the candidates' ability to control their campaign messages, and it will expose them to opposition research.

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(Partial Listing)

Richard Kimball, president of Project Vote Smart responds to this cynical attitude. “While Project Vote Smart doesn't need the candidates' cooperation to get the goods on them, the public is always interested in finding out which of their candidates has enough courage to expose themselves to their opponents in order to help voters. One campaign consultant told me, ‘Our campaign only answers issue questions if they come with a campaign contribution or endorsement.’”

The Political Courage Test has been created, designed, and drafted by more than 200 of the nation’s most prominent journalists, political scientists, and leaders of the major and third political parties.

The results of each candidate’s Political Courage Test may be obtained from:

- The toll-free Voter’s Research Hotline (1-888-VOTE-SMART)
- The Vote Smart Web site (www.votesmart.org)

Project Vote Smart is a national research organization founded by national leaders such as Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, Michael Dukakis and Newt Gingrich. It is funded entirely through foundation grants and the individual contributions of 45,000 members.

Following are the results of the 2008 Maryland Political Courage Test.