

Qualities to Look for in a Presidential Candidate

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Presidents should have certain admirable qualities to earn your vote

Every four years the voters of the United States are called upon to choose a president to lead the federal government. With endless campaign ads, television debates and media analysis, voters have to deal with a lot of information when deciding on who to vote for in the presidential election. Voters must define the qualities of an ideal presidential candidate to determine how well the actual candidates match up.

Organizational Leadership

Presidents depend on a large team of advisers to help them make informed policy decisions. A good quality for a candidate is the ability to organize an effective team and then get as much as possible out of that team. The president should be able and willing to debate with advisers on the merits of a given decision in order to bring in as many different viewpoints to important decisions as possible. PBS Frontline says it is an important part of organizational leadership to minimize “the tendency of subordinates to tell their boss what they sense he wants to hear.”

Knowledgeable About Issues

A presidential candidate should be knowledgeable about the issues of the day and able to discuss them freely with the media and the public. The more informed a candidate is on the issues, the more detailed he or she can be in policy prescriptions and vision for the future.

Personal Character

Voters often look beyond the issues into the personal moral character of the presidential candidate. According to the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, voters tend to rely on the "perceived honesty and trustworthiness of the candidates." There cannot be perfect knowledge about a candidate's trustworthiness, but a voter must make a value judgment based on the information they have.

Respect for Constitution

The U.S. Constitution is the most important founding document of the United States government. Voters should look for evidence that the presidential candidate has respect for the laws of the constitution because it provides the legal boundaries for executive power in the United States. The president should have a great knowledge of the constitution and have a history of applying it to every new piece of legislation and policy question.

Flexible Mind

The president has to deal with a lot of different issues simultaneously -- ranging from foreign policy to domestic policy to unplanned crisis events. A flexible mind is an important asset because the president will be making dozens of important decisions on many very different issues on a daily basis.