SERP

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POLITICS AND PRIVACY: DO WE NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT A POTENTIAL CANDIDATE?

Word Generation - Unit 1.22

Focus Words

candidate | campaign | ethics | issue | display

WEEKLY PASSAGE

Sam Ellis was a strong supporter of one **candidate** for President. He agreed with all of her positions. He planned to vote for her in the election. Then, one morning, Sam read in the newspaper that his candidate had once been caught with marijuana. This had happened back when the candidate was in high school, over 25 years earlier. Sam was disappointed. He wondered if she still deserved his vote.

During **campaigns**, we learn a lot about political candidates. Some have abused alcohol or drugs. Some have cheated on their spouses or stolen money. Do we have a right to know personal details about political candidates? Some people say yes. They point out that a candidate is asking for the public's trust. They ask how we, the public, can understand a candidate's **ethics** and values if we don't know about his or her personal life.

Others think that if we exclude everyone who ever made a mistake, we might leave out people who would make good leaders. Some people think we should focus on how candidates will handle crucial **issues** like terrorism, pollution, and global warming, not how they handle their marriage or their private mistakes. Should some parts of a candidate's personal life be off-limits?

Imagine this: one of your friends posted a photograph of you being a clown and doing something very embarrassing at a party (use your imagination). If one day you decided to run for public office, you could be sure that this photo would be **displayed** in newspapers, on television, and all over the internet. One funny moment from years earlier would follow you into your future. Would you then feel like your privacy had been invaded? Or would you say that the public has the right to know about your teenage behavior?

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FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

candidate : (noun) a person running for office

FORMS: _____

EXAMPLES OF USE: _____

NOTES: _____

campaign : (noun) a political contest

FORMS: _____

EXAMPLES OF USE: _____

NOTES: _____

display : (verb) to show

FORMS: _____

EXAMPLES OF USE: _____

NOTES: _____

ethics : (noun) beliefs about what is morally right

FORMS: _____

EXAMPLES OF USE: _____

NOTES: _____

issue : (noun) a matter of public concern

FORMS: _____

EXAMPLES OF USE: _____

NOTES: _____

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PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

In 2008, New York Governor David Paterson called a press conference to admit to an **ethical** mistake. Years earlier, he confessed, he had several affairs while he was married to his wife. Some people applauded his honesty. Others wondered why he chose to put his mistakes on **display**. When it comes to politicians and political **candidates**, which **issues** should be private, and which should be public?

In March and April 2008, New Yorkers were asked the following question: Do you think the press should report if a married politician has an affair?

- *33% said: Yes, always.*
- *34% said: Only if the politician used public money to pay for the affair.*
- *15% said: Only if the politician ran a* ***campaign*** *based on family values.*

Option 1: How many New Yorkers think that the press should always report if a married politician has an affair?

A) about one in two

B) about one in three

C) about one in four

D) about one in five

Option 2: In the same poll mentioned above, 40% of respondents said that the press should report illegal drug use by a politician under any circumstances, even if the drug use occurred when the person was much younger. Based on this information, are Americans more tolerant of politicians who use drugs, or of politicians having extramarital affairs?

Discussion Question: Which of the views above do you find most convincing? When someone decides to become a **candidate** for political office, are they deciding to put their marriage or relationship on **display**? Or should infidelity only become an **issue** if it involves some other **ethical** breach directly related to the candidate's public role, like stealing money or running a hypocritical **campaign**?

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THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

Mr. Seemy has been discussing an upcoming election with his students. He is still undecided about which **candidate** he will support even though the **campaign** is nearing its end. He is unhappy about some ugly comments one of the candidates wrote on a social media site. Even though the comments were made ten years ago, the candidate's opponent is **displaying** the information and is claiming that it is an important **issue** for voters.

Mr. Seemy doesn't like the comments, but he also questions whether it's **ethical** to dig through a candidate's old posts. He wonders what his students think on the issue, so he creates this survey.

→ Take the survey yourself, and then compare your responses with those of your classmates and discuss the differences in your answers.

Ethics Survey

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = totally unethical and 5 = highly ethical), please evaluate the following behaviors:

A Facebook user lying about his or her age.
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Reading a text message on your friend's phone without his or her permission.
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Finding a $20 bill on the hallway floor and keeping it.
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Posting that a restaurant has bad food.
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Sharing a photo of someone without their permission.
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Not challenging a rumor even though you know it's untrue.
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Searching through old posts on social media to see if you can find something embarrassing about a political candidate.
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Think of two more and ask a classmate to evaluate:

_____
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

_____
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

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DEBATING THE ISSUE

Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A When candidates run for office, their personal lives are fair game. We need to know if they are good people with solid ethics.

B Political candidates should be prepared to have their personal lives on display. It's part of the job. They can explain their embarrassing mistakes, and the voters will understand.

C We should look at some parts of a candidate's personal life. We need to know if they broke the law, but we don't need to know about their marriage or their teenage mistakes.

D We should focus on how candidates will handle important issues like terrorism. Their personal lives should be private.

E _____

_____

_____

Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting – can you tell why you think that?

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

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WRITE ABOUT IT

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

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