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**THE VOTER'S
SELF-DEFENSE
MANUAL**

Project Vote Smart

CNIP
Center For National Independence in Politics/
Project Vote Smart
1992

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CNIP's PROJECT VOTE SMART

Dear Readers:

On the facing page, you will find one of the most unusual and unlikely groups of allies. Often political enemies representing very different points of view, we have come together to fight a battle that must be won – with your support.

It has become commonplace for us to witness people throughout the world struggle in the streets for some small measure of freedom – freedom that we have learned to take for granted. Yet while we have supported these people in their struggles, we have seen our own democracy begin to die. We are now the lowest participating democracy in the Western Hemisphere.

For the past four years, we have been quietly organizing and testing an effort which we hope will make citizens independent from candidate campaign gimmicks and allow them to track the performance of those they elect. An effort that takes the technology that has been used to manipulate voters' and the public's emotions and turns it around to the citizens advantage instead. It represents power from the bottom up, not the top down. Our plan is to gather the enormous body of useful, factual information that exists on candidates and then provide each citizen with instant access to the information relevant to her or his own unique concerns. To that end we have come together to offer **PROJECT VOTE SMART**.

"A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

– James Madison

The Center for National Independence in Politics (CNIP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. We do not endorse or lobby for any cause nor do we support or oppose any candidate running for office. No contribution is accepted from any organization, corporation, or Political Action Committee (PAC). To insure all funds go directly into the program effort, CNIP's twenty-one staff members, consisting of Ph.Ds, attorneys, and other professionals, have agreed to receive minimal wages or none at all. We are supported by 140 volunteers and interns in this effort. This manual is one of six components to Project Vote Smart and represents a crucial first step in our effort to:

reempower the American people.

Sincerely,



Richard Kimball – Board President

Other Project Vote Smart programs include:

• **VOTER INFORMATION HOTLINE**

1-800-786-6885.

This telephone number allows each individual citizen across the nation to instantly access accurate information, on his or her own unique concerns, about his or her 1992 presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial candidates. The information includes candidates' voting records, performance evaluations given by dozens of competing special interest organizations, campaign finances, and biographical information – the information you want to know, when you want to know it, and on the candidates you need to know it about. All you will need is a specific question and a telephone.

• **NATIONAL POLITICAL AWARENESS TEST**

This questionnaire is being given to every presidential, congressional and gubernatorial general election candidate. It seeks their responses to questions on the actual issues they will confront if elected to the job – not the issues created by their political campaigns. The issue areas that are addressed in the questionnaire are taxes, program spending/revenue priorities, national debt, unemployment, trade, defense, health care, education, drugs, the environment, abortion, anti-crime/gun control, and legislative priorities. This information is being released **after the primaries** on a state by state basis, as the interviews are completed. You can access the results by calling the Voter Information Hotline.

• **REPORTER'S RESOURCE CENTER**

1-503-737-4000.

This number is for our nation's political journalists. An effective media is absolutely essential to the health of our political process. Working with many of the country's leading journalists, we have

staffed an extensive reference center that allows journalists to instantly check the credibility of campaign claims. The service includes a Reporter's Source Book, which includes listings of advocacy groups, think tanks, and academic experts in over fifty issue areas. This publication has been provided free to over 5,000 political reporters in the hope that they will do the necessary credibility check on candidate claims and political commercials.

• STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

To our great surprise and pleasure we discovered hundreds of students and teachers used our systems during a brief two-month testing phase in 1990. It was apparently making politics and government come to life in the classroom. As a result, in collaboration with Oregon State University and Rutgers University, we are designing curricula materials to help schools utilize Project Vote Smart in the classroom and to help reverse the trend of voter apathy among our youth.

Through the realization of these programs, CNIP/ Project Vote Smart's goal is to put power back in the hands of the American people by providing them with the single most crucial ingredient to our democracy . . .

INFORMATION.

THE DILEMMA

WHY DO VOTERS NEED A SELF-DEFENSE SYSTEM? WHAT ARE THE THREATS?

Over the last twenty years, the political landscape has changed dramatically. In a high-tech climate that has encouraged negative, issueless campaigns, the voter has been left with little guidance in making the wise choices so necessary if we are to self-govern successfully. During the political campaign season, Americans find

themselves assaulted from all sides by hype, baiting, mudslinging and rumormongering, all in the name of “the democratic process.”

Two major changes have allowed this to occur:

1. High-tech campaigns have allowed many candidates to measure what their different constituencies want to buy in the political marketplace. Today’s candidates, backed by sophisticated surveys and polls, know the price paid or rewards gained for everything they say before they say it. As a result, they have learned to move Americans emotionally rather than intellectually.

2. Traditionally stable institutions (i.e., closely-knit local schools, churches, communities, and local newspapers) where Americans were able to air their concerns and problems, as well as seek options for dealing with them, are no longer stable. As our society has become highly mobile and dependent on television for information, our institutions have begun to fail their historic educational purpose.



CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL REALITY

These new politics require that a candidate for federal office raise millions of dollars to finance a successful campaign. As much as 70% of the candidate’s time will be spent on the phone, in private meetings, and at events with wealthy interests, trying to raise the money needed to win. Today, unlike the first two hundred years of American history, little of this money comes from small contributors like you.

The money is used in 3 ways:

I. Pollsters are hired to measure what the voters want to purchase in the political marketplace.

II. Consultants are hired to take that information and tailor the candidate's image to fit the results of the polls (or to tailor the opponent's image not to fit, through mudslinging commercials, etc.).

III. The public is saturated with these images, usually in emotional, non-informative television commercials.

THE WINNER?

The candidate who most accurately measures what voters want to buy, then tailors his or her image, and saturates the voters with that image.

THE LOSER?

The voter who is left without a reliable source of information with which to make an informed choice.

THE DEFEATED?

Democracy.

THE FUTURE?

As long as campaigns use these tactics successfully and voters are dependent on campaigns for information about the candidates, this negative cycle is unlikely to change.

WHO'S TO BLAME?

The citizens who elect the candidate. The media, which is unlikely to take a candidate seriously if he or she doesn't have the money to run a television campaign; the major financial contributors, who don't like to give money unless they know it is being spent in ways proven successful, i.e., a television campaign; and the candidates, who quite naturally tend to do what is necessary to win, i.e., get on television with issueless soundbites.

It is easy to point our fingers and find legitimate reasons to blame any of these groups for our current situation. However, the question we should be asking is: "What can we do to get out of this mess?" Not, "Who's to blame for getting us into it?"

Defend yourself and your democracy against the manipulative campaign process.

- 1. Remember who is in charge. In our democracy, you are the boss and elected officials are the temporary hired help.**
- 2. View their campaigns as job applications.**
- 3. Ask yourself if the candidates are giving you, the employer, the information you need in order to hire wisely.**

Project Vote Smart offers citizens a new weapon with which to defend themselves against manipulation — dependable, unbiased information, unfiltered by campaign and political hucksters.

The best defense is a good offense. Take positive steps to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable you to make wise choices in the voting booth.

1. Consider refusing to participate in polls during an election.

Polls can have a devastating effect on the legitimate campaign process. They allow a candidate to know the price of a public statement before it is made. It can put a candidate's campaign in control of the interview process. These polls are often used to draft messages that will appeal to you emotionally, but will not inform you intellectually.

2. Use rating information available on incumbents' voting records in Congress. Many groups across the political spectrum rate congresspersons according to their own biases and special interests. Know what these biases are and be aware that their information is often skewed to support one political party over another. Use ratings from several groups to gain a well-rounded perspective of the incumbent's record. Samplings of the ratings for your state's congressional delegation appear in this Voter's Self-Defense Manual. Additional ratings may be obtained by calling our hotline:

1-800-786-6885.

3. Take a look at which interests are paying for your candidates' campaigns. Is their financial support coming primarily from small contributors, large donors, out-of-state interests, or Political Action Committees (PACs)? Again, samplings of this information can be found in the Voter's Self-Defense Manual.

4. Compare incumbents' campaign ads and rhetoric with their actual voting records on the issues that are important to you. Listen for their answers to questions on issues they will likely have to deal with if hired for the job. Project Vote Smart is interviewing over 1000 federal and gubernatorial candidates on these issues during the campaign. The results will be available after the primaries, as the interviews are completed, and can be obtained by calling:

1-800-786-6885.

5. Find out about the challengers' biographies and responses to the National Political Awareness Test, as well as (for those challengers who have previously run for office) campaign finance information and voting records, by calling our voter's hotline. This information is constantly being updated for your area. Call **1-800-786-6885** for current information. This is an important step as the general election challengers had not yet been identified at press time; therefore, information about them is not included on the enclosed "hard cards."

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE MEDIA:

- 1. How is the media covering the campaign? Are opposing candidates treated in a like manner?**
- 2. Who is interviewing the candidate – an ally, an adversary, or a nonpartisan interviewer?**
- 3. Is the media participating in the creation of soundbites and photo opportunities?**
- 4. Are media stories giving you the information you need on issues facing your community and your country? Or are they focusing on who is winning and losing before you have had a chance to decide?**
- 5. Remember: you, the public, own the airwaves. If stations are not helping you in your effort to get the information you need to make wise and informed decisions, COMPLAIN to both the station and the Federal Communications Commission:**

Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

(202) 632-7000

TRACK YOUR CANDIDATES:

1. Do they focus on only one or two very general and popular issues with which they feel comfortable? Or are they willing to take a stand on unpopular issues as well, such as raising taxes, cutting social programs, etc.?

2. Take opportunities to observe them in person. Are their public appearances (speeches, walkabouts) primarily issueless photo opportunities?

3. Know the difference between campaign literature (flyers, placards, etc.) and position papers. Candidates should prepare short, clearly understandable papers stating their positions on controversial issues important to you. They are more informative than campaign advertisements and should be available upon request from the candidate's campaign office. Read them critically.

4. With ads (radio/TV/newspaper), ask yourself: who are they targeting – women, single-issue voters, businesspeople? What is the ratio of meat (issues) to mush (image) – does it contain information about issue positions and qualifications? Is the candidate trashing the opponent (mudslinging, name-calling, rumormongering, or baiting)? Is the candidate using words which appeal to emotions such as sympathy, anger, fear, or prejudice? Remember, a candidate is often the worst source of information about his or her opponent. If the candidate is spending time telling you why you *shouldn't* hire the opponent, rather than telling you why you *should* hire him or her ... **WATCH OUT!**

5. Keep a scorecard during the campaign. This will help you keep track of how the candidates stand on issues that are important to you. We are providing a score card (next page). All that you need to do is fill in your top personal concerns and the candidates' names, listen for the candidates' statements on those concerns, score each candidate on your issues using a scale of 0 to 10. The higher the number the more effectively you think the candidate addresses your concerns. And, lastly, add up the scores and use your scorecard on Election Day to help you pick your candidate.

This scorecard is brought to you in collaboration with **DEBATE AMERICA** and **THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS.**

SCORE ★ CARD			
YOUR CONCERNS	CANDIDATE 1:	CANDIDATE 2:	CANDIDATE 3:
TOTAL			

SCORE EACH CANDIDATE ON THE ISSUES USING A SCALE OF 0 (low) - 10 (high)

- POSSIBLE CONCERNS**
- Abortion • AIDS • Banking System Reform • Candidate Experience & Leadership Qualities •
 - Child Care • Cost of Living • Crime • Drugs • Economy • Education • Environment •
 - Federal Budget Deficit • Foreign Aid • Government Spending • Gun Control • Health Care •
 - Homelessness • Housing • International Trade • Insurance Reform • Jobs •
 - Legislative Priorities • Military Spending • National Defense • Poverty • Race Relations •
 - Revenue Priorities • Taxes • Social Security

FOR MORE INFORMATION on candidates or registration and voting call CNIP/Project Vote Smart's Voter Information Hotline at 1-800-786-6885 or your local League of Women Voters.

GETTING INTO THE ISSUES

A Citizen's Guide to the 1992 Elections

Brought to you by
League of Women Voter's Education Fund

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INTRODUCTION

The following issue summaries are brought to you by the League of Women Voters and are meant to serve as a starting point as you begin to research the issues and define which ones are important to you. The issues that are summarized on the following pages are by no means an exhaustive listing of all of the issues that will play a role in the November elections; they are simply a sampling offered by the League of Women Voters.

Use the summaries to get you started, then do some research on your own. Go to your local library, read about the issues you have defined as important. Talk about the issues whenever you get a chance, through conversations you will discover others' points of view and better define your own. Remember; the more you know, the better the choices that you make on election day will be.

It's easy to forget sometimes what elections are about. Defined more by candidates' personalities than by their policies, today's political campaigns can rob voters of their chance to chose. We end up scrambling for scraps of substance, aching for answers to the critical questions of our time.

With the 1992 elections upon us, it's time to say, "enough!" It's time to remember that elections are about issues -- the challenges that we face as a nation and the policies we can pursue to make the United States a better place to live and work. Elections are about choices -- the options confronting our leaders as they respond to new and developing challenges at home and abroad. And they're about answers -- the straight talk we need from candidates about the things they'd do if elected.

What is the role of the United States in this rapidly changing world? What can we do to bring down our sky-high federal budget deficit? With our resources so tied up in debt and other commitments, how can we create jobs and achieve progress on health care, welfare reform and the environment?

These are the questions we need to be asking this year's candidates for President and for Congress. The national leaders we

elect in November have an unprecedented chance to reshape our world and to make the United States more responsive to the needs of its people. On virtually every important issue, there are different choices we can make, different directions we can follow. Without an understanding of where the candidates would take us, voting turns to guess work. We lose our chance to send a clear message about where we think this country should be.

Sending that message is what *Getting Into Issues* is all about. In this citizen's guide to the 1992 elections, you'll find background information on the issues and the choices that will face the national leaders we elect in November. And for each set of issues and choices, there's a set of questions designed to get candidates talking about specifics and to get voters thinking about the answers we need to hear.

So whether you're organizing a candidate debate, meeting with women and men running for federal office or -- like most of us -- simply following the campaigns in the news, use *Getting Into The Issues* as an election-year resource. If you have the opportunity, put the questions on these pages to the candidates yourselves. And if you don't, use the questions and the background information to compare and contrast the candidates' positions and to judge whether they're being substantive and straight.

But before judging the candidates, judge for yourself how you feel about the issues. Of the choices presented, which policies and programs do you think the United States should be pursuing? What if we combined elements of two or more approaches? Or how about trying something completely different?

Voting is never a perfect match -- you may agree with a candidate on one issue and disagree on another. What's important is to select the issues you feel are most critical and to choose the candidates who are approaching those issues the way you want to see them approached. As for the candidates not approaching the issues at all, let them know that you need answers.

Get into the issues. And don't forget to vote.

The Economy

Debt and deficit spending are issues that will influence nearly every policy decision our next President and Congress will make. Getting a handle on the federal budget deficit -- estimated at \$400 billion this year -- will be a must in the coming years. The recent debate over federal aid to cities in the wake of rioting in Los Angeles gave us a taste of what's to come. Even though it was put together in response to what everybody agreed is a crisis in America's cities, the measure was delayed and scaled back because of arguments over how much we can afford to spend.

The Issues

The U.S. government has run a budget deficit since the 1970s, spending more money each year than we take in through taxes and other revenues. Every time we fail to balance the federal budget, we increase the national debt -- the amount of money we have borrowed and not paid back. Debt holds a tight grip on federal government spending because of the interest we owe. In 1992, \$286 billion -- one out of every five dollars our government spends -- will go to "debt service," or interest on the \$3.9 trillion we've borrowed.

Debt saps investment, say economists. As long as it continues unchecked, there are fewer and fewer federal dollars for the things we need to spur economic growth in the years ahead -- such things as infrastructure (roads, bridges and sewers), education, and research and development of new technologies for industry. Other areas in need of investment? Health care, aid for cities, job training, services for the poor--anything that can help create a more healthy and productive America.

The federal budget deficit and the national debt aren't the only reasons for the slow economic growth we have experienced in recent years. Drops in investment by private industry, a decline in the skills of American workers compared to workers in other countries, and even a tired work ethic have been blamed for contributing to the nation's weakened economy. Nevertheless, a new commitment to fiscal responsibility and long-term thinking from our government leaders might be just the thing to inspire change.

The Choices

There are only two ways to reduce the federal budget deficit -- cut spending or raise taxes -- and both cause problems for politicians and for voters. Voters are reluctant to pay more money to a government so often portrayed as inefficient and irresponsible. And politicians are afraid even to utter the "T-word" for fear that their opponents will brand them moneygrubbers and spendthrifts who don't deserve your vote.

Similar obstacles stand in the way of many proposals to cut government spending. Voter groups are predictably quite fond of programs that pay special attention to them and fight to keep their benefits in place when it's budget-cutting time. Their representatives in Washington, fearful of losing votes, support only those cuts they won't get an earful about back home.

Looking to force action on the deficit, the White House and Congress in 1990 reached an agreement raising certain taxes for higher-income Americans and "capping" federal spending in three categories -- domestic, defense and international spending. Under the agreement, programs compete for the funds available for their category only. Critics charge that the agreement doesn't make sense because the "walls" between the categories won't let us use the "peace dividend" from the end of the Cold War to meet urgent needs at home.

Policy makers have indeed made several attempts to lift the budget agreement. But the fact is that discretionary spending -- the money lawmakers and the President have the authority to decide how to spend -- is becoming a smaller and smaller portion of total government spending. Entitlements -- money and services government is committed to deliver every year -- are expected to cost more than \$700 billion in 1992, about half of the entire federal budget.

Entitlement programs include Social Security, Medicare -- the government health program for the elderly and disabled -- and Medicaid -- the health program for the poor. Experts say we could save billions if we limited increases in entitlement spending. Among the options: taxing benefits more, reducing cost-of-living adjustments or "means testing" to limit how much we are

spending on people who don't necessarily need the government's help.

So what's left for the economy after we pay for entitlements, interest on the national debt, the savings-and-loan bailout and other commitments? Not a lot of money for a lot of needs. Many candidates, for example, are calling for major new investments in the nation's infrastructure as a way to boost the economy and create jobs. Also sought: more aid for cities and new funds for education, job training and summer jobs.

Questions for Candidates:

- Where do you think we should put the money we save from defense spending cuts -- to reducing the deficit or to domestic needs such as education and jobs?
- What's your plan for reducing the federal budget deficit and paying off our national debt? Where and by how much would you cut government spending?
- What will you do to create jobs and spur economic growth?

Swallowing New Taxes

As much as we may hate to pay them, taxes are necessary to cover the costs of just about everything government does. And that's not all taxes can do. The tax code can be designed to favor the rich or the poor, to stimulate investment and savings, or even to discourage certain behavior -- such as smoking, drinking or guzzling gas.

Advocates for the poor point out that some taxes are *regressive* -- meaning they impose an unfair burden on low-income Americans. Sales taxes and excise taxes on such goods as gasoline and food are examples -- the poorer the taxpayer, the more he or she pays as a percentage of income. The U.S. income tax -- with rates at 15 percent, 28 percent and 31 percent, depending on income -- is an example of a *progressive tax*.

So when the 1992 candidates propose wonderful-sounding new government programs, find out how they propose to pay for them. If they support new taxes, ask what kind of taxes. And if they say new taxes are out of the question, find out what they would cut to pay for their ideas. Because without new taxes, new ideas mean something's got to go.

Social Policy and Welfare

The debate over the social services American society provides to the needy has taken a turn in recent years. With resources dwindling and with new emphasis on personal responsibility, social policy has focused not just on helping needy Americans get by, but on helping them get up and out of poverty. A big obstacle to better benefits for the poor: many Americans are unwilling to commit hard-earned dollars to programs for people they feel should be supporting themselves.

The Issues

It's called the "safety net," and it's what American society has built to protect the needy from the horrors of poverty and joblessness. Among the Americans it serves: 33 million who live in poverty; as many as 3 million who are homeless; and more than 20 million who will be unemployed at one time or another this year. A big problem is that the safety net is needed more in bad times than good -- in times when government lacks the resources to pay for programs that can ease the pain.

When people say "welfare," it's a good bet they're talking about Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the federal government program created during the Depression to serve the poor. Currently, just over 5 percent of Americans -- or 13 million people -- receive cash benefits through AFDC. Joining AFDC in meeting the needs of the nation's poor are numerous programs that provide important services and support but not cash. These include food stamps, health care, housing subsidies and job training.

A lot of people have started to look at welfare and social policy issues through the eyes of the nation's children. If we aren't doing everything we can to help children succeed, they say, we are dooming them -- and ourselves -- to a future of even greater need. By 1990, more than one in five of America's kids lived in poverty. Conservative estimates put the number of American children

who are homeless on any given night at 100,000.

Even for not-so-poor kids, such modern-day realities as broken families, single parents and two-earner households can often translate into trouble and neglect. Helping children at all income levels overcome hopelessness and boredom, many argue, is an investment in a stable and productive future for all Americans. The alternatives -- more drugs, crime, violence and dependence -- are in nobody's interest.

The Choices

Critics of the American welfare system point to what they call a "cycle of dependency" that provides few incentives for people to work or get off welfare. As a result of these concerns, limited work requirements have been a part of the AFDC program since the 1960s, and a welfare reform law enacted in 1988 requires states to enroll 20 percent of welfare recipients in education or work programs by 1995.

Not good enough, say some critics. Welfare recipients, they argue, have certain obligations to society in exchange for the benefits they receive. Some states, for example, cut benefits if a parent has additional children or fails to keep a young child in school. Another welfare rule put in place by states: limits on how long an individual can receive assistance.

But advocates for the poor argue that compassion also is needed. AFDC, they argue, reaches fewer than six in ten of the nation's poor children, and real benefits have declined by 27 percent over the last two decades. Together with food stamps, Medicaid and housing subsidies, AFDC benefits fail to provide even a modestly secure standard of living for families with children. Advocates say that by providing better benefits -- together with support services such as job training, transportation and child care -- AFDC and other programs can ease the transition from welfare to work.

Many of the current proposals for new social policy reforms seek to ensure that parents have the resources they need to meet kids' needs. The proposals include: new tax credits for families with children; tougher child support enforcement to hold absent parents accountable for bringing up kids; improvements in the quality and availability of child care; and requirements that employers provide more flexible work arrangements and family leave benefits.

And to make sure that more children arrive in school "ready to learn," advocates have proposed full funding for Head Start, a popular and successful government program that provides early childhood education but only served one in three eligible children in 1991. According to researchers, one dollar spent now on preschool programs for kids will save nearly five dollars we would have to spend later on special education, law enforcement, welfare and other last-resort programs.

Housing is another area where people are saying government can do a better job to help poor families. Today, a new mortgage on an average house consumes more than 50 percent of a young family's income, up from 23 percent in 1973. The result is that many families live in overcrowded or substandard -- and often dangerous -- conditions, while others remain homeless or pay rents consuming as much as 70 percent of what they earn.

Questions for Candidates:

- What will you do to provide additional income security for poor American families?
- With housing costs out of reach for many Americans, what can government do to make sure that assistance and affordable housing are available?
- Do you support full funding of Head Start? What other measures will you back to make American kids "ready to learn"?

Welfare Queens or Well-Meaning Citizens?

There are a lot of stereotypes about the nation's welfare recipients. A look at the numbers, however, shatters any notion that these are lazy people intent on draining the system. In 1988, for example, 40 percent of those in poverty earned wages, but not enough to pull them out of poverty. Also, more than seven in 10 of the nation's AFDC recipients have only one or two children, and fewer than 10 percent of the families have received AFDC benefits for more than a decade. Researchers say that compared to the benefits that middle- and upper-class Americans receive from government in the form of tax breaks, Social Security and Medicare, the benefits we provide for the poor are poor themselves.

International Relations

With the melting of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy is at a crossroads. In the past, as much as 70 percent of U.S. defense spending has been aimed at protecting against potential threats from the Soviet Union. With those threats now greatly diminished, where should the United States focus its international attention?

The Issues

Experts say that the concept of "national security" has been turned on its head in the past few years. No longer just a factor of how many weapons or how big an army a country has, national security today focuses more on the fact that we're all in this together as nations. With economic, environmental and military concerns crossing national borders more than ever before, "collective security" has become the new buzzword. As the Gulf War and this year's efforts to stop the bloodshed in Yugoslavia have shown, international cooperation may be the wave of the future.

On trade issues, for example, "common markets" are the trend, with nations in different regions around the world coming together to eliminate tariffs and trade barriers. In Europe, the South Pacific and North America, these "free-trade" proposals are touted as boosting individual nations' export opportunities while providing easier access to new and cheaper goods, services and materials. Standing in the way of the new arrangements are concerns in several nations, including the United States, about the loss of self-government and the extent to which jobs will be exported along with everything else.

On military issues, a chief international concern is the spread of dangerous weapons. Weapons transfers among nations are a multibillion-dollar international business. As a result, at least ten developing nations had or were working on nuclear weapons in 1990, and many more were at work on

chemical or biological weapons. That's in addition to enormous stockpiles of weapons of all types in the United States and other industrialized countries.

The United States' current enemy, foreign policy experts argue, is not one nation or one group of nations but instability and chaos. The American economy -- the world's largest importer and second largest exporter -- can prosper only in a stable global system that allows economic growth, expansion of markets and access to world resources.

The Choices

This year, President Bush proposed a 1992-97 defense budget topping \$1.6 trillion, a reduction of \$50 billion -- or 3 percent -- from the amount set out in the budget agreement signed by the White House and Congress in 1990. Pennies, argued the Administration's critics. Some experts have said that based on actual national security needs, 50-percent reductions in defense spending are feasible and that even 25-percent cuts are too cautious.

One area of potentially large defense savings is spending for U.S. troops stationed abroad. Currently, we have 245,000 troops in Europe alone. President Bush has proposed to cut that number by about 40 percent to 150,000. Others say we should cut troops further or tell allies in Europe and Asia that they should pay to keep us there.

What's needed, many point out, is a serious effort to determine exactly what the U.S. role in the post-Cold-War world should be. Once we know who we are, they say, then let's figure out how and where to cut troops and spending. The Choices for the 21st Century Education Project at Brown University has laid out four options for U.S. foreign policy in the wake of the Cold War rivalry. They include:

- 1) "Standing Up for Human Rights and Democracy." The United States uses military, economic and political resources to back governments that have good human rights records and the support of their people and to oppose those that don't. Downside: calls for unilateral use of military force, sometimes in far corners of the globe.

2) "Charting a Stable Course." As the world's sole superpower, the United States maintains strong political, economic and military alliances with the aim of preventing aggression and economic disruption. Downside: to maintain stability, need may arise to support stable but undemocratic governments.

3) "Cooperating Globally." Instead of attempting to police the world alone, the United States addresses global problems in cooperation with many other nations, vesting more power in international organizations. Downside: lose ability to act on the world stage without support of close allies and leading nations.

4) "Building Our Economic Strength." The United States brings its troops home and cuts military and foreign-aid spending drastically while investing in the economy, reducing dependence on foreign oil and addressing other pressing national problems. Downside: lose influence and means to address global threats.

Immediate demands, however, won't wait for the United States to make up its mind about the future. Negotiations with Mexico and Canada on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), for example, are rapidly drawing to a close. Talks also are still under way on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which sets international rules on government subsidies for exports and other trade issues.

Also demanding immediate and sustained attention from our national leaders are global "hot spots" where ethnic and regional rivalries are simmering. Among the immediate options for making the world a safer place: increasing aid to the former countries of the Soviet Union and other emerging democracies, limiting nuclear weapons tests, and halting arms sales to nations in unstable regions.

Questions for Candidates:

■ What's your vision of the U.S. role in the post-Cold-War-world? What needs to happen in the coming years to make your vision a reality?

■ How much do you believe we can cut defense spending? What defense programs can we do without?

■ Regional fighting and weapons proliferation mean the world may be more dangerous now than during the Cold War. What will you do to make the planet a safer place?

Health Care

Health care is an issue that touches every American. Not only do we need to be sure that our hospitals and doctors are prepared to meet our needs, but we also need to know we can afford their services. Recent polls and election results have shown that American voters are sick and tired of the U.S. health care system. Health care, we seem to be saying, is too expensive, too different for the haves and have-nots, and too complicated to understand.

The Issues

The American health care system relies on a patchwork of "payers" -- including individuals, employers and more than 1,500 private insurance companies. Another big health care payer is the government. The federal Medicare program, for example, covers 33 million elderly and disabled Americans. The Medicaid program -- jointly funded by federal and state governments -- targets health care services to the poor, including pregnant women and children.

How much are all these payers paying? As a nation, we're spending \$1 out of every \$7 we earn on health care. Over the last three decades, increases in the amount we spend to stay healthy have consistently topped the inflation rate. And, if nothing is done to control costs, we could be spending \$1.6 trillion for health care by the year 2000 -- \$14,000 per family per year.

All for what? If the true measure of a country's health care system is the health and well-being of the people it serves, Americans are right to be calling for

change. Women and children, it appears, suffer most. In 1991, 25 percent of pregnant women in the United States did not receive timely, adequate prenatal care. The result: we ranked 23rd among the world's nations in infant death rates, a shameful level by any measure.

The U.S. system, critics charge, is geared too much to treatment of problems and not enough to prevention, which in the long run costs less and results in a healthier America. Part of the reason for our focus on treatment is Americans' shrinking access to needed health insurance and services. Because we can't afford check-ups and preventive care, we don't go to the doctor or the hospital until it's an emergency

Today, between 31 and 37 million Americans have no health insurance at all, and as many as 50 million more are underinsured -- without enough coverage to pay for the care and attention they may need. Most alarming: the uninsured include as many as 9 million children and 14 million women of childbearing age.

The Choices

Many believe that the U.S. health care system needs a complete overhaul because it no longer meets our medical needs at an affordable price. Others argue that the flexibility and choice provided by the U.S. system are important to preserve and that less drastic change is called for. The one thing all reformers agree on: the need to control costs while expanding Americans' access to health insurance and medical services.

In recent years, support has been building around three types of health care reform. These are:

1) **"Play-or-Pay" Reforms.** This proposal builds on the current system of employer-provided health benefits. Employers would have a choice: provide a basic package of health insurance to workers *or* pay taxes to fund a public insurance program that would extend coverage to all Americans not covered at work. Supporters see "play-or-pay" as a solution that provides needed reform without radical change. **Downside:**

potential new burdens on businesses.

2) **"Single-Payer" Reforms.** This proposal would establish a government-run program providing health coverage for all U.S. citizens. The single-payer system would be paid for by new taxes on citizens and businesses. Supporters say switching to a single payer from our complicated, multiple-payer system will make enormous savings available to cover everybody. **Downside:** budget-driven approach may cut into innovation and availability of services.

3) **"Private Market-Based" Reforms.** This proposal would keep the current system largely in place while encouraging more competition among health-care providers and insurers. By making consumers and businesses more aware of what they're getting for their money, private reforms look to the market to cut costs and improve services while expanding government programs to cover the uninsured. Supporters say it's the American way. **Downside:** may not offer needed fundamental changes.

In the absence of far-reaching reforms, many are saying that federal and state governments should expand programs that provide health care services for "underserved" populations such as the poor, the elderly and the disabled. The federal Medicaid program, for example, reaches only a fraction of the nation's low-income population. And the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, which provides food and nutrition education to low-income women and their children, today serves an estimated 4 million Americans out of an eligible population of 7 million.

Questions for Candidates:

■ How do you propose we extend health care coverage to the more than 30 million Americans who are uninsured? How would you pay for the new coverage?

■ What will you do to keep health care cost increases more in line with inflation so we aren't paying \$14,000 per family per year for health care in the year 2000?

■ The U.S. infant mortality rate is a disgrace. How do you think we could move out of 23rd place in the world and closer to first?

The Special Problem of Long-Term Care

America is "graying" every day. About 40 percent of Americans who turn 65 this year will need long-term nursing home care at some point in their lives. And they're not the only ones. Between 9 and 11 million Americans are chronically disabled or dependent on others for help with the basic tasks of living. Elderly and disabled Americans and their families often find that the costs of the care and attention they need dwarfs the amount their insurance policies will pay.

Many say we need a public policy guaranteeing coverage for long-term care for all Americans who need it. Make sure candidates for President and Congress figure long-term care into their health-care equations. Being disabled or dependent is hard enough. Find out what candidates would do to shield families and individuals from the staggering costs of long-term care.

The Issues

The battle entered the spotlight at the Earth Summit in Brazil in June. One of hundreds of nations there, the United States was criticized for refusing to go along with new requirements for reducing emissions of air pollutants linked to global warming. Also under fire: the United States' refusal to sign a treaty aimed at conserving plant and animal species. The stated reason for the U.S. position in Brazil? Concerns about the impact of the measures on jobs and businesses back home.

With the U.S. economy already on shaky ground, politicians have steered clear in recent years of new laws and regulations that businesses say will hurt them. Take global warming. Requiring new spending by industry to cut carbon dioxide emissions -- the chief culprit in a possible future rise in the Earth's temperature, according to scientists -- will cost jobs and profits, our government says. And all for science we aren't entirely sure of.

Environmentalists argue that such short-term thinking by government and business blinds us to new opportunities and jobs that will come with keeping the environment clean. We're also blind, environmentalists say, to the long-term implications of not acting now. More than a year after we went to war in the Persian Gulf, they point out, we still don't have a long-term strategy to reduce our dependence on oil. By encouraging more conservation and by developing alternative fuels, the argument goes, we could ward off another crisis and protect the environment all at once.

Another area where environmentalists say we need to think about the future is in how we produce and handle wastes. Today we throw away 180 million tons of garbage every year -- more than 1,400 pounds per person -- together with 500 million tons of hazardous wastes. Just figuring out how to get rid of it all is no longer enough, especially with health and safety concerns making new landfills and burners tougher to site.

The Environment

The northern spotted owl. The snail darter. The sockeye salmon. In danger of extinction because of human activity, these animals have been waved like flags in the battle for the country's environmental conscience. On one side are people who wonder whether we should hold up "progress" or jobs for uncertain science or for critters we could probably do without. On the other are people who say we can't have progress without a healthy environment -- and that the two don't cancel each other out.

The Choices

"The Economy vs. The Environment." The way some people talk about it, it's a war that only one side can win. Others, however, say it's possible for both the environment and the economy to be healthy -- and that choosing one or the other won't cut it. What's needed are answers to searching questions about the risks we'll accept and the prices we're willing to pay on our way to a healthy and prosperous future.

On the issue of global warming, for example, opponents of new requirements on industry say the risks to our economy are too great. Environmentalists counter that the risks of not acting now are even greater -- and that cutting emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollution caused by burning fossil fuels will pay off whether or not the predictions of a warmer climate are true.

We need to kick the oil habit, environmentalists say. With transportation accounting for two-thirds of U.S. petroleum use, experts say the best way to kick the habit is through new gas taxes that would discourage guzzling and spark interest in alternative fuels. Gas prices should be higher anyway, say some, to reflect the true price we pay -- in environmental clean-up and military commitments -- to keep the oil spigot on. Nevertheless, recent government efforts to increase gas taxes and toughen fuel-efficiency standards for cars have failed. The reason? Worries about protests from voters and industry.

Conservation and increased energy efficiency are other ways to lessen U.S. dependence on fossil fuels such as oil and coal. Environmentalists also say we need to do a better job researching and developing fuels that are renewable and don't pollute. These alternative fuels -- solar, hydro and wind power -- aren't the only energy sources with hard-core fans: natural gas and nuclear power (see sidebar) also are being cheered as cleaner and smarter than oil and coal.

On other environmental issues, people are saying that government needs to wake up to the waste problem by encouraging

recycling and "pollution prevention" -- stopping the production of wastes in the first place. And with seafood advisories, closed beach areas and lost wetlands all in the news in recent years, environmentalists say it's time to put new teeth in government efforts to keep our water resources safe and clean.

Questions for Candidates:

- Do you believe we should do everything we can to prevent global warming? What should we do?
- What will you do to strengthen our national energy strategy and reduce U.S. dependence on oil?
- Do you agree with environmentalists that we may be facing a waste crisis in the future? If so, what can we do about it?

The Nuclear Question

With all the current concern about carbon dioxide and other pollution caused by burning fossil fuels, nuclear power is again in the spotlight. With no air pollution to speak of, nuclear plants currently supply about 20 percent of all U.S. electricity. Increasing that percentage, many people are saying, is one way to cut U.S. contributions to global warming while reducing our dependence on oil.

But many politicians and voters in the United States are still scared to put away their "No Nukes" signs. That's despite new and safer technologies and warm embraces of nuclear power in recent years by other countries such as France and Japan.

Concerns about the safety of the power plants aren't the only obstacle in the way of nuclear power's U.S. comeback. Disposing of nuclear waste -- which takes hundreds of thousands of years to lose its radioactivity -- poses a big challenge in this age of NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) politics.

Politics and Government

The American public's esteem for its elected officials and political institutions is at a low. A major survey of Americans conducted in 1990 by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press provided a snapshot of voter feeling in the country. A big majority of those surveyed -- 78 percent -- said they feel that elected officials in Washington often lose touch with the public; a smaller majority -- 57 percent -- said that people like themselves have no say in what our government does.

The Issues

A lot of people pin Americans' feeling of distance from their leaders in Washington on a system that puts raising money above representing voters on a politician's list of things to do. The cost of campaigning for federal office has skyrocketed in recent years. Spending for 1988 congressional campaigns (House and Senate) totaled \$458 million, with the average Senate seat going for \$3.7 million. According to reform advocates, the high cost of running for office -- and winning -- scares off potential challengers and stifles competition and debate.

The need for cash also opens the door to contributions from special interests -- corporations, trade associations, interest groups and others with big stakes in what government does. To shore up their lobbying efforts in Washington, special interests set up Political Action Committees (PACs) that raise money and spend it on candidates and campaigns. In 1988, PAC contributions accounted for more than a third of total campaign receipts in House and Senate races -- with 75 cents of every PAC dollar going to incumbents. Critics say PAC contributions leave elected officials accountable not to voters but to whomever writes the biggest checks.

When asked about voting in the Times Mirror survey, nearly three in four Americans said that elections give them

"some say" in what goes on in government. Barely half of all eligible voters went to the polls in the last presidential election, however, and less than 40 percent turned out in 1990. Part of the reason for all the no-shows, many feel, is the hassle of registering to vote in this country. Among the obstacles between voters and the ballot box: hard-to-find places to register, inconvenient hours, procedures that discriminate against certain groups, and deadlines that pass before the campaigns even get interesting.

The Choices

Earlier this year, the House and Senate passed a bill aimed at changing the way we pay for congressional races. The President ultimately vetoed the campaign finance bill, saying he could not stomach two of its prime parts: voluntary limits on campaign spending and public financing for congressional elections.

Spending limits have long been a controversial component of efforts to reform how we pay for political campaigns in this country. With mandatory limits considered a violation of candidates' constitutional rights, voluntary caps have gained favor as a way to keep spending down by offering incentives such as federal matching funds to candidates who stay within the limits.

But using public funds for congressional races is equally controversial. While opponents see it as an unnecessary draw on taxpayer dollars, supporters say public financing is a small price to pay for a more representative government. Already used in presidential elections, public financing of campaigns is touted as a way to limit the need for special interest dollars and to create a level playing field for challengers.

To increase voter participation in elections, people are saying we need to open up the registration process. One way to open it up, they say, is to do what already works in several states: allow citizens to register to vote when applying for or renewing their driver's licenses or nondriver's IDs. Other state-tested options: providing registration by mail and at other government agencies,

including welfare and unemployment offices; and allowing people to register on election day.

Opponents of voter-registration changes cite costs, states' rights and the potential for fraud as reasons to be wary. Supporters call these complaints cover for officeholders' fears of the political uncertainty that would come with more new voters. Once people are registered, supporters of registration reforms point out, 80 to 90 percent of them vote.

In search of still more ways to bring people back to government and government back to people, policy makers are talking about everything from targeting special-interest lobbying to cleaning up political campaigns. But candidates don't have to wait until after the election to show their commitment to citizen participation and representative government. By running substantive and informative campaigns, they can point the way right now to politics and government that work.

Questions for Candidates

- What reforms would you support to make running for and holding federal office less of a money chase?
- How do you propose we work to increase voter turnout in this country from the dismal levels of recent elections?
- Why do you think American voters are feeling more and more detached from government? What would you do to welcome them back to politics?

You Mean I'm Not Really Deciding?

It's easy to forget that when American voters go to the polls, they aren't actually voting for a candidate but for people pledged to that candidate in the electoral college. If no candidate receives a majority of the electoral college vote, the power to pick the President goes to the House of Representatives.

The system, say many observers, is obsolete and undemocratic and only aggravates the problem of citizens feeling their votes don't count. Bills to abolish the electoral college have been considered numerous times by Congress. If we elected the President solely on the basis of the popular vote, their supporters say, he or she would have a direct mandate from the people -- and voters might feel a little better about their say in where the nation's headed.

Just ask Grover Cleveland, who won the popular vote in 1888 but lost the election. Benjamin Harrison, it turned out, received more electoral votes and became President.

We have compiled a great deal of information from many different sources for you in Project Vote Smart.

- Use the enclosed “hard cards” that contain specific information on your state’s elected officials as a good first step.
- Then call Project Vote Smart (1-800-786-6885) for additional information on voting records, ratings, and campaign finances, etc. Please be patient, we will be handling calls with minimum staff and volunteers. If you can’t get through, please wait and call again.

“... American voters are perfectly capable of defending themselves against these new and abusive campaign practices, if only given the information necessary to do so. This effort is only the beginning. If we can show that the American people are willing to fight back in this intelligent and thoughtful way, there is no end to our ability to collect an ever-increasing and sophisticated database of facts about those wishing to govern us. In doing this, we hope to help create a citizen-controlled system that allows each of us to evaluate the candidates based on our own unique concerns and then track their performances once we have hired them for the job. ...”

**Richard Kimball
Board President**

***IF YOU THINK THAT WE ARE
ON THE RIGHT TRACK,
PLEASE HELP US BY
BECOMING A MEMBER.***

- JOIN CNIP/Project Vote Smart! We are dedicated to bringing you, the voters, factual, unbiased information to help you make informed decisions at the voter's booth. We cannot do it alone. We must all work together to keep our democracy alive. Public support is necessary to keep Project Vote Smart's lines of voter education open and to improve them in the future. We have decided to refuse all political, business, corporate, or Political Action Committee (PAC) contributions so that we can remain totally independent. This voter's self-defense system we call Project Vote Smart will be paid for by citizens, or not at all. **We need you to join with us.** This national effort will enable us to fight back against the abusive campaign tactics that have cheapened us as Americans and are eating away at the very heart of our democracy.

One of the most important steps you can take is to join with us in our efforts. We are planning many free benefits for our members including: issue updates, vote-tracking of their delegation, newsletters, updated Voter's Self-Defense Manuals, and more. Every single membership helps us reach 100 more Americans with our services. Fill out the form on the back cover and send in your tax-deductible membership contribution today. It is a small price to pay given the goal we hope to attain:

The reempowerment of the American people.

Project Vote Smart

Free Services

For citizens:

Voter Information Hotline 1-800 > 786-6885
Voter's Self-Defense Manual * 1-900

* \$3.50 charge for printing and mailing of manual

For reporters:

Reporter's Resource Center 1-503-737-4000

PLEASE HELP!

SEE MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION ON
THE PREVIOUS PAGE

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Please offer your comments
and suggestions:
