U.S. National Government
Assignment: Creating a Voter Guide
Dr. Clare Brock, Fall 2019

As you may (or may not) be aware. The City of Denton will be holding a Bond election, and the state of Texas has a variety of Constitutional Amendments on the ballot as propositions. The election will be held on November 05, and TWU has recently become a designated polling site!

You can find a brief description of the bond items up for election on the City of Denton website (https://www.cityofdenton.com/en-us/news-events/stories/bond-election). And the state of Texas provides an explanation of the constitutional amendments (propositions) on the ballot (https://www.sos.texas.gov/elections/forms/2019-explanatory-statements.pdf).

One of the biggest hurdles facing voters today is the sheer volume of information they need to clear about the propositions on their ballot, particularly in non-presidential elections. We are going to help the Texas Woman's University community clear this hurdle by developing a voter guide that is relevant to our community and can be distributed to students and other interested individuals. Our voter guide will be *nonpartisan* but will incorporate a basic description of each ballot measure, and clear, objective arguments for and against each item.

The class has been split in to two groups to create this voter guide. You are expected to complete a guide entry for all of the issues on the ballot that have been assigned to your group (6 in total for each group). I have provided two examples. Because this is a local bond election and a state proposition election, learning information about the issues could require some investigative effort on your part. Look, in particular, for local news coverage of the proposition issues.

All guides will include the following basic information*
Last day for Denton County Voters to register to vote
First day of Early Voting, Last day of Early Voting
Election Day
Information for voters, such as what to bring to the polls
Link for Denton residents to look up a sample ballot

*Please note, my example provides all of this information. You may copy exactly what I have. The reason I am asking you to copy it, instead of just giving you the guide with the information already provided is that I want you to take the time to read and know the information yourself.

Your guide will include the following proposition / bond information
Basic explanation of each item (assigned to your group) on the ballot
- You may take this information from the links above or do additional research on each of these issues. But you need to describe the item in language that "normal" people can understand. You may not copy and paste from the respective websites.
- These descriptions should be concise, short, and clear. I will not put a word limit or guideline on this, since accurately describing a ballot proposition will depend on the complexity of the issue being considered.

An argument in favor of and against each item.

- You should research what arguments are being made for and against each item on the ballot. This is NOT your personal opinion. You may explain what positions the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are taking, what positions local businesses or schools are taking, or how community groups feel about the issue. Again, this should all be put in to your own words, not copy and pasted from the websites of these groups.
- These arguments should be concise, short, and clear.
- **Each argument in favor and against should be no more than approximately 50-100 words.** In other words, you will write between 300 – 600 words total in your arguments.

When evaluating web resources, consider applying the CRAAP test – evaluate the source's currency / timeliness, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose. (see more here: http://libguides.library.ncat.edu/c.php?g=778558&p=5584082)

Evaluation Criteria:

Substance:

- Description of each proposition or bond issue is clearly laid out, accurate, and understandable
- Include a pro and a con / argument for and against each ballot issue
- Issue arguments are written from an objective perspective that is fair, accurate, and does not reflect personal opinion.
- The guide uses **multiple sources** to verify the accuracy of information and contains no inaccuracies in fact-based reporting
  - Please note, your arguments for and against issues may not all come from the same place. That would be content plagiarism and is prohibited. You are not to replicate someone else's existing guide, you are to create your own, drawn from multiple sources.
- Overall is fair, inclusive, and balanced in its treatment of each ballot issue.

Mechanics:

- Guide has been edited for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and proof reading.
- Formatting replicates the provided example
- Uses **footnotes**, as demonstrated in example. Each footnote must include a complete and properly formatted citation. A link, alone, is insufficient.
- Is geared toward a general audience without substantial political knowledge
- Each ballot issue entry is between 100-200 words, and includes an argument in favor and in opposition to the issue