Taking the Initiative

The Living Voters Initiative (livingvotersguide.org) is a website that was created to provide Washington voters with a non-partisan space to make decisions about the statewide initiatives on the November 2010 ballot.

The Living Voters Guides allows citizens to cut through the campaign fog and hear what others have to say, as well as collect and organize their own thoughts and to make their voice heard by others.

Purpose

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Interaction Design

Pros and Cons

Each participant helps write the Guide by creating a personal pro and con list for each ballot measure, optionally including pros and cons written by other voters. Weighing the pros and cons, they next take a stand on the measure, selecting a point on a spectrum from unreserved support to vehement opposition.

Summary pages for each ballot measure provide a current snapshot of the Guide, including the percentage of users who support and oppose and the key pro and con points for each position.

Platform

Considerit for Deliberation

At the heart of the Living Voters Guide is Considerit, an innovative platform for nuanced and civil political interactions amongst many people. Considerit is not just for ballot measures: it is a deliberation platform that draws on the wisdom of crowds to generate a set of key considerations for decision-making: helping organizations identify the pro and con points that matter most to their users, readers or stakeholders.

Evaluation

What Makes a Good Point?

We are currently leveraging site metrics, content analysis, surveys and interviews to discover:

(a) how usable the LVG is
(b) how effectively the LVG surfaces the points that resonate and
(c) how the LVG incentivizes participation and transforms opinions

Thousands more have used it.

Step 1: Read a neutral description of the ballot measure. Record your initial stance with the slider.

Step 2: Read through pro and con points created by other voters. Endorse the points you agree with by adding them to your pro/con list. If you don’t see a point represented that you think is important, you can add it.

Step 3: Review your initial stance. Has creating your pro/con list prompted you to change your mind?

Step 4: Click ‘Finish’ to see where you stand, review other voters key points and print your personalized voters guide!

Step 1: Select an interesting measure, bond, or initiative.

Step 2: See the distribution of aggregate opinion on the measure by LVG users.

Step 3: See the measure’s most popular pros and cons.

The result is a voter’s guide that evolves as more and more voters weigh in with their considerations. Anyone can peer into the psyche of people who take different stances on the measures, listening to people with whom they might not usually interact.

In the first month that the Living Voters Guide has been online, hundreds of Washington voters have helped to write it. Thousands more have used it.

Considerit is an open source Ruby on Rails project. It is licensed under the AGPL. You can make an anonymous SVN checkout of the source code at https://trondheim.cs.washington.edu/engage-svn/LVG/considerit

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Engage Project
http://dub.washington.edu/projects/engage

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