

A GUIDE FOR FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICES IN FRESNO COUNTY

*The glue that holds all relationships together -- including
the relationship between the leader and the led is trust, and
trust is based on integrity."*

Brian Tracy, 1997



APRIL, 2008
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

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Voters across the nation are expressing their displeasure with the negative tone and character of electoral campaigns. Personal attacks, innuendo, rumor and unethical practices have become commonplace. Voter alienation and cynicism is resulting in very low turn-out for elections that will determine the future of our nation, our states and our local communities.

The purpose of this document is to help raise the quality of electoral campaigns in Fresno County. We want to encourage our candidates for office to hold themselves up to a high ethical standard, and we want to encourage voters to hold candidates accountable to this standard. Campaigns can be critical and hard-hitting and still be fair and ethical. Our democracy depends on a free and vigorous exchange of differing ideas. Candidates must be pressed to make their case on the issues and their view of the future, and to explain why their past record and experience best qualifies them to lead. But campaigns too often cross the line into distortion, character defamation, appeals to prejudice and scurrilous attacks on the personal lives of opposing candidates.

All candidates for office in California are offered an opportunity when they file for office to voluntarily subscribe to the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices (EC Sec. 20400), using the form shown on the back page of this document. We encourage all candidates for office in Fresno County to exercise this option. If they choose not to do so, voters are entitled to an explanation from the candidate.

We encourage voters to assess candidates by evaluating the tone and character of their campaigns, remembering that the way they lead and manage their campaigns is likely to be the way they lead and manage if they are elected. We believe that these five core values are widely shared by Fresno voters and should be adhered to by candidates for office in Fresno County: integrity, fairness, respect, responsibility and stewardship.

✓ CHECLIST for Evaluating Candidates							
<i>Candidates' Names</i> ☞							
Integrity							
Fairness							
Respect							
Responsibility							
Stewardship							

CORE VALUES OF A FAIR AND ETHICAL CAMPAIGN
(Supplement to the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices)

Integrity:

Candidates should emphasize their views, beliefs, experience and qualifications and contrast them with those of opponents without malice and based on factual information. Candidates should remember that their conduct in the campaign is evidence of their character, and should do nothing that reflects adversely on the integrity of representative democracy.

Fairness

Candidates should not use or agree to let third parties use subtle deceptions, half truths, falsifications, tactics designed to interfere with voter contact, or such practices as push polling. If such practices are used by third parties, candidates should repudiate them immediately and publicly upon knowledge of their occurrence.

Respect:

Candidates should treat opponents with respect, avoiding demeaning references and demeaning visual images. They should not use or allow to be used personal attacks, innuendo, whispering campaigns or stereotyping.

Responsibility:

Candidates should ensure that campaign supporters will observe these principles of fair campaign practices and take full responsibility for all advertising created or used on their behalf by staff and supporters.

Stewardship

Candidates should conduct their campaign openly and publicly, at all times recognizing that if elected they shall be representing the interests of all voters rather than those of single interest groups

What's Fair?	What's Unfair?
Criticism of a voting record	Personal attacks
Criticism of a policy position	Rumors and innuendos
Comparison of experience	Demeaning references
Questions about leadership ability	Unsubstantiated charges of misconduct
Debate of tough political issues	Distortions and lies

CALIFORNIA CODE OF FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICES

There are basic principles of decency, honesty, and fair play which every candidate for public office in the State of California has a moral obligation to observe and uphold, in order that, after vigorously contested, but fairly conducted campaigns, our citizens may exercise their constitutional right to a free and untrammelled choice and the will of the people may be fully and clearly expressed on the issues.

THEREFORE:

(1) I SHALL CONDUCT my campaign openly and publicly, discussing the issues as I see them, presenting my record and policies with sincerity and frankness, and criticizing without fear or favor the record and policies of my opponents or political parties which merit such criticism.

(2) I SHALL NOT USE OR PERMIT the use of character defamation, whispering campaigns, libel, slander, or scurrilous attacks on any candidate or his or her personal or family life.

(3) I SHALL NOT USE OR PERMIT any appeal to negative prejudice based on race, sex, religion, national origin, physical health status, or age.

(4) I SHALL NOT USE OR PERMIT any dishonest or unethical practice which tends to corrupt or undermine our American system of free elections, or which hampers or prevents the full and free expression of the will of the voters including acts intended to hinder or prevent any eligible person from registering to vote, enrolling to vote, or voting.

(5) I SHALL NOT coerce election help or campaign contributions for myself or for any other candidate from my employees.

(6) I SHALL IMMEDIATELY AND PUBLICLY REPUDIATE support deriving from any individual or group which resorts, on behalf of my candidacy or in opposition to that of my opponent, to the methods and tactics which I condemn. I shall accept responsibility to take firm action against any subordinate who violates any provision of this code or the laws governing elections.

(7) I SHALL DEFEND AND UPHOLD the right of every qualified American voter to full and equal participation in the electoral process.

I, the undersigned, candidate for election to public office in the State of California or treasurer or chairperson of a committee making any independent expenditures, hereby voluntarily endorse, subscribe to, and solemnly pledge myself to conduct my campaign in accordance with the above principles and practices.

_____ Date

_____ Signature