

MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE VOTING IN A GENERAL ELECTION

1. CHARACTER

The first and foremost consideration before casting a vote is the candidate's character. Some of the major elements of character of concern in public life are: **integrity, honesty, virtue, fidelity, loyalty, justice and worth.**

Integrity includes:

- uprightness of character,
- probity,
- soundness of thinking
- justice and
- an unimpaired state.

Honesty, among many other aspects, includes:

- trustworthiness,
- uprightness,
- freedom from fraud,
- fairness,
- equity,
- morality
- just conduct.

Character is extremely important in persons occupying public office for the following reasons:

- i. There will be more consistency in government policy. A man of good character cannot be compromised in his decision-making process.
- ii. He is less likely to be impaired by errant behaviour. He can be relied upon for integrity in all his relationships, either inward or outward looking.
- iii. Honesty and integrity mean that we will know where a man in office stands at all times, i.e. reliability. The people can rely upon the decisions made and the actions taken as straightforward and in their best interests.
- iv. People of good character are less likely to yield to pressure from special interest groups and make decisions which will act to the detriment of the majority of our citizens.
- v. A character defect is all-pervasive in the sense that it impacts the personal life and political life as well; *you cannot arbitrarily say that a man can be dishonest and immoral in his personal life and honest and moral in the exercise of his official duties as a*



government official. On the contrary, his character colours all aspects of his thinking and of his life. We cannot permit persons with multiple standards to occupy offices of public trust.

- vi. We need people in public office who not only have the abilities and skills to perform the duties of that position but whom, we the public they serve, can depend upon to be of strong character.

**Don't be fooled by
outward appearance, wealth, tribe, religion,
popularity or the size of the candidate's
pot-belly, backside, neck or chick.**

2. NATIONALIST OR TRIBALIST?

Since independence, we have experimented with leaderships elected on the basis of tribe, religion, wealth, state, military support, etc. The leaders failed their tribes, religion, states, military colleagues and the Nigerian people in general. Nigeria has never tried to vote a Nigerian. A Nigerian is a candidate who is a nationalist to the core and wishes to go down into history as a man or woman who played part in the transformation of the country into a prosperous and fully democratic nation.

Before you cast your vote, research the candidate and vote on the basis of nationalism rather than tribe, religion, popularity, wealth or state. It will be too expensive for Nigeria to vote more of the same in 2011. The train of development, progress and prosperity is almost leaving Nigerian behind.

With global warming and its consequences on the horizon, dwindling natural resources, possibility of alternatives to crude oil emerging in the near future, current over-dependence on rent from crude oil, you cannot afford to experiment with unpatriotic, corrupt and incompetent tribesmen and members of your religion or state. Your future is your vote. Use it wisely.

3. LAW ABIDING STATUS

A candidate who has violated the laws of the land or earned criminal conviction will never respect or work in favour of enacting strong laws. That candidate has over 90% probability of getting involved in corrupt behaviours or shield corrupt associates and criminal minds. The menace of corruption in Nigeria is obvious in the slow movement of files in offices, police extortion tollgates and slow traffics on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost workers syndrome, election irregularities, etc. The character of a candidate will colour every aspect of his/her thinking and actions.



At a time when the poverty level in Nigeria is 43% and climbing, fortified institutionalised corruption, skyrocketing interest and inflation rates, and woefully undermined legal system, Nigeria cannot afford a new wave of corrupt politicians.

Before voting a candidate, please research his/her law abiding credentials - criminal records and convictions.

4. RECORD OF PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Study the background of great men and women who shaped or in the process of shaping history e.g. Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Barrack Obama, Arch Bishop Tutu, George Washington, etc. You will discover that they are ordinary people, determined to bring about change and progress to their immediate communities and the country at large and blessed with a trail of verifiable and authentic accomplishments and sacrifices. To arm a candidate, who lacks a verifiable record of past accomplishments and sacrifices in life with political power, is a license to corruption, injustice and national failure. A candidate who has never accomplished anything genuinely in life will have nothing to offer a nation but more of the same that made him/her. For example, a man who amassed wealth through deceit, corruption or crime may boast of accomplished life by showing off his ill-gotten assets. Access to a political office becomes an extension and license to legitimise and perpetuate a higher level of behaviours that paid him in the past. More time is spent legitimising or hiding ill-gotten wealth than to serve the people, the rule of law is sacrificed, lip service is paid to the fight against corruption, law enforcement is weakened, and the independence of the judicial system is undermined. Therefore, before voting, make it a point to investigate the record of past accomplishments of the candidate.

5. CAPABILITY FOR THE PUBLIC OFFICE

In addition to the record of accomplishment, a public office holder must possess what it takes to successfully and effectively carry out the duties of that public office. Nigeria of today and the future needs a leadership that can formulate and implement sound economic, agricultural, infrastructural, education, health, environmental and security policies. Candidates for a political office must possess dazzling charisma, qualities, skills, exposure, talents, knowledge and strength for great performance in the office. The candidate's political, leadership and organisational skills, coupled with his/her emotional intelligence, must be outstanding. Where a political office holder lacks the ability to defend that office, he/she is exposed to the risks of manipulation, incompetence at handling information relating to decision making in the office, mismanagement of the objectives and resources of the office and embarrassment to the nation.

Put it this way – the fact that a candidate is perfect at riding a bicycle in his village, does not make him fit to fly a modern Boeing 787 to Washington. In the interest of our nation, prior to voting, make every effort to satisfy yourself of the capabilities of the.

6. HOW DID THE CANDIDATE MAKE HIS MONEY?

A candidate may have the ability for efficient and effective execution of the duties of a public office. However, the visible affluence and symbols of wealth and philanthropy that grace the candidate's resume may have been fuelled by proceeds of crime, corruption, looting of the national treasury, ritual killings and political assassinations, import and export of contraband goods, and undermining of the national economy and security through underground business dealings. Such an individual is not coming into politics to serve the people but to legitimise his ill-gotten wealth, consolidate his network of likeminded gangs, undermine the judicial system and plant his cronies at strategic public office positions in defence of his/her interest. No nation and people can progress and enjoy peace and security under the administration of such public office holders. In the interest of Nigeria and generations to come, before you vote a candidate, please investigate the source of the candidate's wealth. Take every rumour about the individual seriously and investigate to your satisfaction. If you have the opportunity to meet the candidate in person during campaigning or televised debates, ask the one million dollar question - "HOW DID YOU MAKE YOUR MONEY?"

- ❖ **Note:** a character defect is all-pervasive in the sense that it impacts the personal life and political life as well; *you cannot arbitrarily say that a man can be dishonest and immoral in his personal life and honest and moral in the exercise of his official duties as a government official.* On the contrary, his character colours all aspects of his thinking and of his life. We cannot permit persons with multiple standards to occupy offices of public trust.

7. MOTIVE AND HUNGER FOR THE PUBLIC OFFICE

A candidate's motive for wanting to run for a public office is a very important consideration to a voter. Motive can be difficult but not impossible to establish. The Nigerian public service sector (the customs, the police force, political office, etc.) tend to attract some applicants for the wrong reasons. The Nigerian public sector is synonymous with producing overnight multi-millionaires. This has been a major driver of the endless cycle of corruption witnessed in the public sector. The impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the departments concerned is all too obvious. Before voting or supporting a candidate please make effort to determine his/her motive for running for the public office. Check the candidate's past records. It is often a pointer to the candidate's future ambitions. Listen to the voices of opposition as well as the class of people standing behind his/her candidacy. Often political birds of the same feather fly together.

Assess the depth of a candidate's hunger for the public office. A candidate who is determined to occupy a public office at all cost is not running to serve the people. The agenda driving such candidate's ambition is selfish and destructive. Please deny him/her access to the public office through your vote.

8. WHO IS THE CANDIDATE'S PAYMASTER?

Political sponsorship has become a big business in and an expensive one for Nigeria. The terms of the sponsorship can cripple a candidate's political agenda and divert the limited resources at his/her disposal to servicing political sponsorship contracts. It is therefore imperative that before voting a candidate, one should determine how the candidate's campaign was financed. If in doubt, please do not vote for the candidate.

9. POLITICAL AGENDA – PARTY MANIFESTO

A manifesto is a public declaration of principles and intentions by a political party. It sets out both their strategic direction and outlines of prospective legislation should they win sufficient support in an election to serve in government. Before voting, review the candidate's political manifesto to satisfy yourself that it covers major issues that are dear to your heart. Secondly evaluate the promises made in the manifesto and decide whether you can trust the candidate and his/her political party to deliver. If you have doubts, please do not vote for the candidate.

10. WHERE ARE THE FAMILY MEMBERS?

A well meaning and seasoned politician will have his/her family by his/her side during campaigns; not only for their support but also to communicate to the nation that his/her family members have a stake in the political process. Corrupt politicians, who plan to rig elections by creating confusion, mayhem and political terrorism, often send wife(s) and children to the relative safety of their mansions in Europe and America.

Secondly, politicians who have invested in the education of their children in foreign countries have no stake in the local education system. Before you consider a candidate for a public office, find out where the family members are or plan to be prior to and after the general election.