

AI-Enhanced Online Campaigning for Political Office

Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools have become a central feature of political campaigns at every level of U.S. politics. The following activities examine ways AI tools can be used in political campaigns while critically assessing the messages that candidates are delivering online. Developing codes of conduct for online campaigning and use of AI tools is also explored.

In every state, voters elect people to multiple positions in state government. Massachusetts voters elect the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Commonwealth (or Secretary of State), Attorney General, Treasurer, Auditor, Governor's Council Members, State Senators, and State Representatives. In some states, people also elect State Supreme Court Justices while in others judges are appointed, not elected. You can learn more at [Who Are My Elected Officials?](#)



Political campaign posters at the Hine Junior High School, 8th St. near intersection with D St., SE, Washington, D.C | Public Domain

Images and Slogans

Crafting a popular image and creating a memorable slogan are key ingredients for anyone campaigning for political office. Historian David S. Reynolds (2020) recounts how the image of Abraham Lincoln as the "Illinois Rail-Splitter" helped propel him to the White House in 1860: "the symbols fit the candidate: Lincoln *had* split rails, he *had* lived in frontier cabins; he *had* piloted flatboats; and so forth" (p. 491).

Successful Presidential candidates have always had memorable slogans:

- "Happy Days are Here Again" for Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932
- "I like Ike" for Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 and "I Still Like Ike" in 1956
- "All the Way with LBJ" for Lyndon Johnson in 1964.
- "Let's Make America Great Again" for Ronald Reagan in 1980.
- "Change We Can Believe In" for Barack Obama in 2008.

Earlier presidential campaigns also benefited from memorable music and songs. You can learn more from [Voices, Votes, Victory: Presidential Campaign Songs](#) from the Library of Congress.

Social Media

Using image, slogan, and song on **social media** has become an effective ways for candidates running for political offices to reach voters. Researchers have demonstrated that new political candidates (those running for office for the first time) can receive substantial boosts in financial donations and public recognition using Twitter as a campaign marketing tool ([Petrova, Sen, & Yildirim, 2020](#)). The advantages of social media for political candidates are clear: Instagram, Facebook, and other social media sites are: 1) free to use and 2) can reach large numbers of potential voters - both essential for successful election campaigns.

AI in Political Campaigns

Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools are being used to generate written and visual messages about candidates and issues, create artificially-generated videos, and produce audio featuring voice cloning intended to portray a candidate favorably and opponents unfavorably.

Sometimes AI-generated content contains fake and fabricated images, video, and audio (known as "deepfakes"). U.S. Representative Yvette D. Clarke, a Democrat from New York, said that the 2024 election cycle "is poised to be the first election where A.I.-generated content is prevalent" ([Hsu & Myers, 2023, para. 11](#)).

Codes of Conduct for Online Campaigns and Campaigners

In the current highly polarized political climate of the U.S. and other democracies around the world, some online campaigners actively engage in deceptive claims, hateful or violent speech, and outright disinformation. Social media companies have been slow to respond to these anti-democratic practices.

In Fall 2021, in advance of Spring 2022 elections, Dutch political parties and Internet/social media platforms (Facebook, Google, Snapchat, and TikTok) agreed to the "[Netherlands Code of Conduct Transparency Online Political Advertisements](#)." In agreeing to this first-ever online code of conduct, those running for office in Holland promise not to post misleading messages, hateful content, or take hidden donations from foreign sources.

In the following activities, imagine that you have decided to run for a political office in your state's government. Since considerable amounts of time and money are involved in traveling the state and meeting voters face-to-face, you have decided to do most of your campaigning online. What office will you run for? How will you organize your online

campaign? What image and what slogan will you create to help voters identify with you positively as a candidate? What personal code of conduct will you abide by while campaigning online?

Activity 1: Design an Online Political Campaign for a State Political Office

- Select a position in your state government that you want to be elected to.
- Explore [how current members of congress use social media](#) and how to [design a website for a new political party](#).
- Use **AI text and media generators** to build their campaign website/social media posts for at least 2 social media spaces (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) so that potential voters could interact with you. At the same time, you create your own digital version (e.g., design a website on Google Sites) or use pencil and paper or a digital drawing/mindmapping tool to develop a prototype. Compare and contrast the results and decide what materials for each you want to use and why.
- Next, devise a strategy for increasing voter participation with your online campaign (e.g., virtual events, virtual office hours, social media challenges).
- Share your online political campaign plans with peers and family members for feedback.

Activity 2: Write/Rewrite the Dutch Code of Conduct to Include AI-generated Political Content

- Review the [Dutch Code of Conduct for Online Political Advertisements](#).
- Update the Dutch Code by writing/re-writing their guidelines to include AI-generated political content.
- What statements in the code would you change or add to maintain the truthfulness of political information now that AI can instantly generate campaign materials?

Activity 3: Write Your Personal Code of Conduct for Online Campaigning

- List your own personal core values for fair and open online campaigning for democratic elections.
- Explain what you expect social media platforms should do to maintain fair elections (e.g., remove hateful or violent content).
- **Have AI write a personal code of conduct** that you then revise/remix into your own personal code of conduct for online campaigning. Include what you promise to do and not do in online campaigning (e.g., you will provide truthful information; you will not promote misleading content; you will refrain from using distorted audio-visual messages, including deep fakes).

Additional Resources

- [How To Run For Office](#) (NPR)
- [Running for Office? Try These Political Campaign Slogan Ideas \[2021\]](#)
- [Running for Office the First Time? Here's How to Run a Local Political Campaign](#)

Connecting to the Building Democracy for All eBook

[Building Democracy for All: The Structure of Massachusetts Government](#)

Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
 - *Explain the leadership structure of the government of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the function of each branch.* (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) **[8.T6.8]**
- [ISTE Standards](#)
 - Digital Citizen
 - 2c: Students demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.
 - Knowledge Constructor
 - 3a: Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.
 - 3d: Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.
 - Creative Communicator
 - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
 - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
 - 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.
- [DLCS Standards](#)
 - Ethics and Laws (CAS.b)
 - Digital Tools (DTC.a)
 - Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
 - Research (DTC.c)
- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7



This content is provided to you freely by EdTech Books.

Access it online or download it at

https://edtechbooks.org/mediaandciviclearning/state_office_campaign.

