

Elect to End Torture: Put Candidates on Record

Congressional candidates are running for some of the most powerful positions in our country. You deserve to know what they think about basic moral issues – like torture. But they probably won't tell you unless you ask them.

Go to Campaign Events and Ask Questions

- Campaign events are your chance to interact with the candidate. This person could soon be in Congress!
- You can find campaign events by signing up for email lists on candidates' websites or by calling candidates' campaign offices and asking about upcoming events that you might be able to attend. You should also sign-up for Google alerts about the candidates' names.
- Upcoming forums and debates may also be reported in the news, and they provide an excellent opportunity to have your question answered by multiple candidates.
- Your state parties may also be able to tell you about upcoming events.
- You can help inform other voters by questioning candidates. With a good question you might be able to change candidates' positions, draw publicity to their records, or even influence who wins the election.

Possible Questions

- Would you ever support using torture during the interrogation of a terror suspect?
- Do you believe that the use of what has been called "enhanced interrogation" techniques, which can include techniques like waterboarding, are in compliance with American values?
- Some American prisoners are held in solitary confinement for years or decades without any opportunity for normal conversation with another human being. Many go insane under these conditions. Do you believe that it is morally right?
- Can you describe your vision of how the U.S. can use its influence to end the use of torture by abusive regimes around the world?
- Do you believe that all American citizens, including Muslims, deserve the right to worship as they choose and to receive equal protection under the law? Do you think Muslims ought to be discriminated against on the basis of their religion?

Tips for Getting the Best Response

- Arrive at the event early so that you can get a seat in front.
- Be pleasant and polite. It is good to be a little insistent about getting your question answered – but remember, the story ought to be about the candidate and his or her position on torture – not about you! Avoid getting heated or yelling.
- If the candidate has previously said or done something good with regard to torture, start by thanking him or her for that step. It is very important to let candidates know that voters appreciate it when they do something good!
- Otherwise, try to introduce your question by connecting it to something the candidate has previously said. For example, if the candidate has mentioned terrorism, you might say something like “I believe it is very important to stop terrorism, but as a person of faith I’m concerned about how we do that. I want to ask...”

Publicizing Your Response

- If possible, have a friend videotape your interaction. Videotapes can be VERY important in putting candidates on record. (Don’t spend time at the event with your videotaping friend, though – candidates aren’t always quick to answer questions by people who are videotaping them.) If you can’t videotape, still try to write down word-for-word quotes of what the candidate says about torture.
- Tell us what happened! Send a summary of your interaction with the candidate to nrcataf2012@gmail.com, or call us at 202-547-1920. We want to know if a candidate says something about torture!
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the candidate’s response.

Why this Matters

The 2008 elections gave us a President who ended the use of waterboarding and other so-called “enhanced interrogation” techniques. The 2010 elections gave us a Congress that went out of its way to explicitly authorize indefinite detention without trial. The 2012 elections will also have major repercussions on our work.

In 2012 we need to elect a government that will firmly oppose torture, indefinite detention, and other cruel and inhuman treatment. You can make sure that happens – beginning now – by helping us put candidates on the record.

