

VOTE-SMART

Election 2023 Edition

by Rasik Ranchord (For more info re author see end of this paper)

*VOTE-SMART is a non-**partisan**, step-by-step, concise and at-your-fingertips guide for 'typical' Christians for prayerful, informed voting in Election 2023.*

Our Policy: "We inform but you decide".

*Here is our 5-point action plan encapsulated in the acronym P.I.E.V.E. (rhymes with five!) which stands for
1. Pray 2. Inform 3. Enrol 4. Vote 5. Encourage*

It is a great blessing to live in a robust democracy like NZ. Democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people. This is Election Season, and we, the people, must fully engage with it.

In a democracy numbers count!

1. P = PRAY

Paul encourages us explicitly to pray for kings and all those in authority (1 Tim 2:1-2)

Prayer Points

- Clean Election campaign which addresses issues not attacking candidates
- God will promote more Mordecai's and Esther's (good candidates) and demote Haman's (bad candidates). See Book of Esther also Psalm 75:7
- God will protect all candidates and their families
- Many returning and new Christian MPs will come into this term of Parliament (Ps 75:7).
- God will guide you in your voting decision-making
- Other aspects for prayer

2. I = INFORM

a) **Sources of Information**

- Party Websites for Election Manifestoes (party policies) and Candidate Profiles.
- Electoral Commission for information regarding enrolling, voting places and much more: see vote.nz
- Value Your Vote 2023 – Each Election, Family First provides a pamphlet called 'Value Your Vote' which tabulates each MP by Party affiliation as to how they voted on issues important to Christians in 2021-2023 term of Parliament. It is not what a politician promises but how he/she votes on issues that reveals their true position. You can get hard copies for distribution to your church and friends or online. ValueYourVote.nz
- VOTE-SMART 2023 (this paper)
- Newspapers, **TV, Candidates Meetings**, Leaders' Debates
- Polls are indicative but not infallible, observe the trends from now until the Election.

- Beware of **Misinformation and Disinformation** especially on social media.
- Churches can appoint a point-person who can help your church members with general queries regarding the Election.
- Church Leaders teach your people (do a series) on Christians and their civic duties. We have dual citizenship – in Heaven (Phil 3:20) and Earth – NZ. It is our responsibility to teach (eg Rom 13:1-7; 1 Tim 2:1-2; Mt 22:21; Dan 4:34-36; Esther etc). It is the prerogative of the people to choose.
- **In every congregation people will support different parties.**

3. E = ENROL

- You cannot vote unless you have first enrolled!
- Those turning 18 before the Election are required by law to enrol
- Those who have previously enrolled will receive a letter from the Electoral Commission asking you to update your personal information.
- If you enrol by Sunday 10 September 2023 you will receive an EasyVote Card informing you when, where you can vote.
- You can enroll right up to and including Election Day 14 October 2023.
- Regarding enrolling on the Maori Roll see website below
- See Electoral Commission's website vote.nz Phone 0800-36-76-56

4. V = VOTE **It is imperative to vote**

Statistics - According to the Electoral Commission 81.5% of those who enrolled voted in Election 2020 but 655,000 enrolled voters did not vote (add to this, those who did not even enrol). In the 2018 Census (not 2023 Census which is being processed now), 37% of the people identified themselves as Christians. On the assumption that the demographic and voting patterns between Christians and non-Christians are similar, I estimate about **242,000 people who profess to be Christians did not vote in the last Election. This is a startling statistic! 242,000 doses of salt remained in the salt-shaker! 242,000 candlelights remained hidden! (Matt 5:13-16).**

Voting Demographics

- 78% of 18-24 year-olds voted in the last Election; up to 86% of 55 year olds and over. We need to encourage more younger people to vote.
- Previous Election Data reveals we need to encourage more of our Maori, Pacific Peoples and Asian fellow-citizens to vote.

In NZ enrolling is mandatory but voting (unlike Australia) is voluntary.

How to decide who to vote for –

NZ has a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) Electoral System.

We do not tell you who to vote for but how to arrive at an informed decision. You have two votes: (a) Party Vote (b) Electorate Vote

(a) Party Vote

Determines the number of MPs each Party will have according to its share of the total Party votes cast. To enter Parliament a party must cross the threshold of 5% of the Party Votes (estimated now to be around 170,000, about the size of the population of Tauranga) or win one electorate seat.

Q.1 Which category of Parties do you prefer? There are 3 Categories...

(c.1) **Major Parties**

- We have two major parties **Labour and National**. One of these two parties will lead the governing coalition.
- Who is your preferred Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins or Christopher Luxon?
- *Which coalition has a larger pool of potential competent Cabinet Ministers?*

(c.2) **Minor Parties presently in Parliament:** Green, ACT, Te Pati Maori; they act as support parties and negotiate for their policies.

(c.3) **Minor Parties** not presently in Parliament eg NZ First, TOP, New Conservative, Vision NZ, One Party and many others. Ask yourself (a) can they reach the 5% threshold (see above) or win one electorate seat? If not, their party votes will be redistributed to parties that do cross the threshold. (b) **Is your voting outlook** short or medium or long term? You may want to support a party that may not get into Parliament in 2023 but may in subsequent Elections.

Q.2 Which Party's Vision, Values and policies align with yours?

Consider spiritual, moral, social, economic and environmental factors.

(b) Electorate Vote

Your electorate MP represents you and the electorate area in which you live, in Parliament.

Q.3 Is your present Electorate MP standing again or retiring?

- If standing again are you satisfied with his/her performance? How did they vote on issues important to you?
- If **retiring**, then find out about your new candidates. How do their values etc align with yours.
- Choices at times can be difficult to make. You may decide to vote **tactically** and give your Party Vote to one party and electorate vote to a candidate from another party.

Q.4 When does Voting take place?

- Election Day is Saturday 14 October 2023. You can vote from 9am to 7pm.
- You can vote in advance from Monday 2 October, two weeks before the Election Day. In the **last Election 70% of votes were cast in advance**. It is not just Election Day but Election Fortnight! Recommend you vote EARLY. Remember, your vote carries the same value as the Prime Minister's vote!
- Vote counting begins at 7pm on Election Night and Provisional results should be known by late evening (Election Results Coverage on TV and Radio etc).

GOVERNMENT FORMATION

Some coalition partners (a) have been declared (b) some will be declared before the Election (c) Some may be declared post-Election after the negotiations.

- **Left Bloc (coalition)** Q.5 *Which Bloc do you think will be able to form a governing coalition?* (see Party Poll trends)
Labour + Green ± Te Pati Maori ± others
- **Or Right Bloc (coalition)**
National + ACT ± NZ First ± others
- Whichever coalition can secure at least 61 seats in the 120-seat Parliament will form the governing coalition. Coalition negotiations will commence soon after Election Day. As to when the new 54th Parliament is sworn in, depends on how long the coalition negotiations take.

5. E = ENCOURAGE

I want to get this paper VOTE-SMART 2023 into the hands of thousands of Christians. Will you collaborate with me by circulating it to as many people as possible, among ministry colleagues in your denomination and ministers' associations and your church members?

We must overcome the Goliaths of ignorance, apathy, disillusionment and pessimism.

Let us do our part conscientiously then leave the rest in the hands of the God of Providence. Our first responsibility as Christians is the Gospel. (His saving grace) but God has also delegated some of His authority to human governments to restrain evil and promote good (His common grace (Rom 13:1-7).

- "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Mat 22:21)" – Jesus.
- "Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it" – President Dwight Eisenhower
- "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing" – Edmund Burke
- "In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends". -Martin Luther King Jr.

About the Author - Rasik Ranchord....

- Minister for over 50 years. Presently an itinerant Minister to Evangelical /Pentecostal Churches
- Founder of Prayer @ Parliament (established about 1998)
- National Director of Adopt Members of Parliament for Prayer (AMPP)
- A spiritual counselor to many Christian MPs over the years
- Former Spokesperson on Public Issues for New Life Churches NZ
- Author of disciple-making textbook ('Dare to be a Disciple') as well as articles "God, Gospel and Government"; **Should Christians Be Involved in Politics**. If so to what extent? ' VOTE-SMART and other Pamphlets.

END