

## Why Scorecards and Platform Statements Matter



Every election season, candidates ask voters for something extraordinary: trust. We ask them to believe in us — based on promises that are easy to make and sometimes hard to keep. In a primary election especially — where every candidate carries the same party label — voters have little to go on beyond what a candidate says.

That is why platform statements and legislative scorecards exist. They are not perfect tools. No tool is. But they are often independent, systematic, and verifiable. In a political environment saturated with competing claims, those qualities matter enormously.

### What a Platform Statement Is

Political parties are private organizations that exist to advance a set of values. Party platforms identify those shared values and priorities. When a candidate affiliates with a political party and seeks nomination, they ask voters who share those values to trust them as a representative. A platform affiliation statement is simply a candidate's public commitment to honor those values through their votes and actions.

Signing such a statement is not a pledge of blind loyalty. It is an act of transparency. It says to voters: here is where I stand. I'm willing to say so publicly, and I'm willing to be accountable for my actions.

If a candidate genuinely shares the values outlined in the platform, signing costs nothing. If they are unwilling to sign, voters deserve to know what the hesitation is about. This is a most basic form of political accountability.

### What a Scorecard Is

A legislative scorecard is a systematic record of how an elected official has voted on a defined set of issues, compiled by an organization with a stated set of priorities. Scorecards are produced by groups across the political spectrum — from free-market economic organizations to agricultural advocacy groups to constitutional liberty organizations — and each one measures a legislator's record against a specific set of values.

Many, like Club for Growth and CPAC, are national organizations staffed by experts who read bills from states all across the country. They don't know the candidates. They just read the bills. That independence is precisely what makes them valuable — and less likely to carry personal bias.

Consider what that means in practice. A voter who cares about property rights can look at how an incumbent has been scored by organizations that track property rights votes — not based on

campaign promises, but based on actual votes cast in actual sessions. A farmer who wants to know whether a candidate truly supports agriculture can consult the Farm Bureau's legislative scorecard rather than relying on a mailer.

No single scorecard tells the whole story. Each comes from a unique viewpoint. But consistent high scores from multiple independent organizations that share similar values give voters meaningful, verifiable evidence of a candidate's alignment with those values. A legislator who scores poorly on those same measures — or who dismisses every measure as invalid — is asking voters to take their word for it instead, as if they are somehow smarter than everyone else.

### **The Alternative to Transparency**

When candidates reject the tools of accountability, they are not protecting their independence. They are protecting themselves from scrutiny. The practical effect is the same: voters are left with less information, not more.

Campaigns are not neutral ground. Every candidate presents themselves in the most favorable light possible. That is not dishonesty — it is human nature. But it is precisely why independent accountability tools are needed. A scorecard compiled by an organization with no stake in a particular race is more compelling evidence than a candidate's own campaign literature. A platform statement signed with one's own name is a stronger commitment than a general claim of shared values.

Dispensing with both leaves a candidate free to practice situational ethics. Doing whatever is most advantageous at the moment is a dangerous way to make decisions — particularly in a political environment rich with opportunities for abuse and corruption.

Voters who care about consistency between a candidate's words and their record deserve access to both. They deserve to know whether the organizations that track these issues systematically have found that record to be strong or weak. They deserve to know whether a candidate is willing to make public commitments to those values — or whether they prefer to keep that ambiguous.

A candidate willing to be held accountable has nothing to hide. A candidate who dismisses accountability has already told voters something important.

On May 19th, voters in District 30 will have that choice to make.