AMERICA'S CHOICE

The candidates for president have very different visions for the future of the United States. How will voters choose between them? **BY PATRICIA SMITH**

LITTLE ABOUT THE 2016 ELECTION HAS GONE AS EXPECTED. For Republicans, the big surprise has been Donald Trump. Few thought the real estate **mogul** and reality TV star could defeat 16 other candidates to win his party's nomination.

For Democrats, the shock was the tough primary challenge from Bernie Sanders that Hillary Clinton faced. Almost no one could have foreseen that Clinton—a former First Lady, U.S. senator from New York, and secretary of state—would have to fight so long to defeat the largely unknown senator from Vermont.

With Trump and Clinton now set to square off in November, one thing that can be said for sure is that many people are deeply frustrated with their government. According to recent polls, two-thirds of Americans believe the nation is on the wrong track.

The big challenge for voters this fall will be to look beyond the circus atmosphere of the campaign so far to weigh the candidates' very different visions of the nation's future.

"We have two candidates here who disagree on practically everything and who stand for opposites," says Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. Choosing between them, he says, "has enormous consequences for every citizen and people around the globe."

Stark Contrasts

The difference between Trump and Clinton extends to their backgrounds, personalities, and stands on many issues (*see sidebar, right*).

Trump is a New Yorker who took a real estate business and expanded it into a global brand of hotels, office buildings, and resorts. In 2004, he became a household name with the hit reality TV show *The Apprentice*.

The Republican says he would take a tough stand against undocumented immigrants and build a wall →

WHERE THEY STAND

Here are Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's positions on some key issues. Which candidate shares your views?

Hillary Clinton	Donald Trump
Party: Democratic	**Party:** Republican
Age: 68	**Age:** 70
Hometown: Chappaqua, New York	**Hometown:** New York, New York
Running Mate: Tim Kaine, U.S. Senator from Virginia	**Running Mate:** Mike Pence, Governor of Indiana
ECONOMY	
Clinton favors raising the federal minimum wage to $12 an hour. She believes the wealthiest Americans should pay higher taxes and wants the government to fund infrastructure projects, such as roads, to provide jobs.	Trump says he will renegotiate foreign trade deals to make them more favorable to the U.S. He proposes a 45 percent tariff (import tax) on goods from China and wants to cut the tax rate for corporations.
IMMIGRATION	
Clinton supports a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. She has pledged to use her power as president to protect young people brought here illegally as children.	Trump promises to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and make Mexico foot the bill. He has also proposed a temporary ban on Muslims entering the U.S. from certain countries.
ENVIRONMENT	
Clinton believes climate change is an "urgent threat." She supports the recent deal made in Paris among 174 nations promising to reduce greenhouse gases.	Trump calls climate change "not one of our big problems." He would "cancel" the Paris climate deal and supports constructing a new oil pipeline to Canada.
ISIS	
Clinton wants to step up the campaign of airstrikes against the terrorist group ISIS and increase support for Iraqi and local forces who are fighting them.	Trump has promised to defeat ISIS by bombing the oil fields that fund the group. He says he would send up to 30,000 more U.S. ground forces to fight them.
U.S. ROLE IN THE WORLD	
Clinton says the U.S. must continue to work with **NATO** and other U.S. allies to check aggression by China and Russia. She supports the deal with Iran to curb its nuclear program.	Trump has questioned the amount of U.S. spending on NATO. He says other countries must bear more of the cost of their own defense. Trump would tear up the nuclear deal with Iran.
GUNS	
Clinton supports a ban on assault rifles, expanded background checks, and letting victims of gun violence sue gun makers.	Trump opposes a ban on assault rifles and thinks the right to carry a concealed weapon should apply in all 50 states.

along the U.S.-Mexico border. He also pledges to reverse one of President Barack Obama's biggest achievements, the Affordable Care Act—or Obamacare—which requires most Americans to have health insurance.

Clinton began her career as a lawyer. The wife of former President Bill Clinton (1993-2001), she was probably the nation's most active First Lady. In 2000, she was elected to the U.S. Senate from New York. After she lost the 2008 Democratic presidential primary to Obama, she served as his secretary of state for four years.

The Democrat says she would work to give undocumented immigrants a path to citizenship and make the wealthy pay higher taxes. Clinton has promised to "build on" Obamacare and continue President Obama's push to fight climate change.

The candidates appeal to supporters in very different ways. A Trump victory would put a man who has never held political office in the White House. For some voters, that's a plus: "We don't need a politician for president; we need a businessman . . . to get us out of the mess we're in," says Tom

Krzyminski, 66, of Bay City, Michigan. For supporters of Clinton, part of her appeal comes from her historic candidacy. If elected, she would be the first female president of the U.S.

"The symbolic importance of the fact that there's going to be a woman on the ballot for president shouldn't be underestimated," explains Ruth

"We have two candidates here who disagree on practically everything and who stand for opposites."

Mandel of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

The Big Issues

As in most elections, experts say the economy will play a major role in how Americans vote. The unemployment rate, now about 5 percent, is relatively low. (That's down from 10 percent in 2009—the height of the last financial crisis.) Still, many people haven't seen a substantial increase in their wages in years. At the same time, the growing gap between the

wealthiest and the poorest Americans has caused economic unease.

Trump has seized on that feeling, blaming Obama's policies for a weak economy and promising to use his business skills to "make America great again." Clinton wants to increase the minimum wage and penalize companies that move jobs overseas. She calls income inequality "the defining economic challenge of our time."

But since the mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando in June, the issues of terrorism and gun control have taken center stage. The shooter pledged allegiance to the radical Islamist group ISIS during the attack. Trump blamed Muslims and renewed his call to temporarily ban Muslim immigrants. Clinton placed blame on lax gun control laws and called for a ban on military-style assault weapons like the one the shooter used. The fallout could affect the election. "Headlines matter, and terrorism and guns [fill them] daily," says Sabato.

Another question on voters' minds is who the candidates would appoint to fill any vacancies on the U.S. Supreme Court, including the spot that's open now. Clinton and Trump would likely select very different people—choices that could have a profound effect on the Court's decisions, as well as the nation, for decades.

Unpopularity Contest?

This election is notable for the intensity of bad feeling between the candidates—as well as many Americans' bad feelings about them both.

Trump calls his opponent "crooked Hillary" in reference to **controversies** such as her use of a private email server for government business during

NEVER ★ TRUMP!!

NEVER HILLARY!!
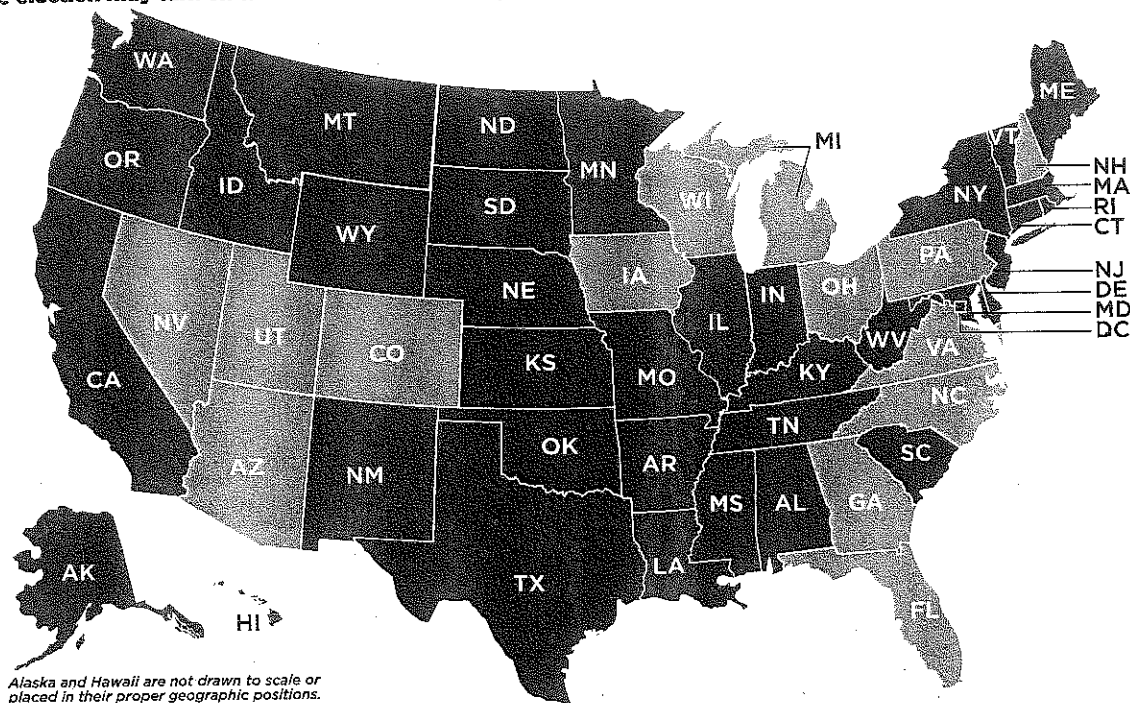
TRUTH-IN-CAMPAIGNING...

What does this cartoon say about how many Americans feel about their choices for president this election year?

14 States to Watch

The election may turn on which candidate wins key battleground (or swing) states.

WA · MT · ND · MN · MI · ME · VT · NH · MA · RI · CT · OR · ID · SD · WI · NY · NJ · DE · MD · DC · WY · IA · PA · NV · UT · CO · NE · IN · OH · WV · VA · CA · KS · MO · IL · KY · NC · AZ · NM · OK · AR · TN · SC · MS · AL · GA · AK · TX · LA · FL · HI

Alaska and Hawaii are not drawn to scale or placed in their proper geographic positions.

- ■ States likely to vote Democratic
- ■ States likely to vote Republican
- ■ States with a large number of undecided voters (battleground states)

SOURCE: *The Washington Post*

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her time as secretary of state. Trump says Clinton is too weak to defeat ISIS or deal with China, which is challenging the U.S. for global influence.

Clinton says Trump is a bully whose "very thin skin" and weak grasp of foreign policy make him "temperamentally unfit" to be president. She says his plan to build a wall to seal off the Mexican border is ridiculous. Further, Trump's proposal to ban foreign Muslims "goes against everything we stand for as a country," she says.

This mistrust is reflected among Americans. A recent Gallup poll found that 60 percent view Trump unfavorably. Clinton fares only slightly better, with 54 percent. Sabato calls them "the two most unpopular major-party nominees anyone can recall."

Both candidates, especially Trump, have also encountered strong opposition within their own parties. Republican leaders, who largely shunned him during the primaries, have mostly endorsed him—but the embrace has been lukewarm at best.

Clinton has struggled to gain traction among young Democrats, who voted overwhelmingly for Sanders in the primaries. It remains unclear whether his supporters will turn out to vote for her in November.

The Key to a Win

It's rare for the two major-party nominees to have such poor ratings going into the general election. So the key to winning in Novem-

ber, experts say, will be appealing to undecided voters—particularly in battleground states *(see map, above)*. Whereas most states usually vote Democratic or Republican, these states could go either way, throwing the election to either candidate.

In the coming months, Clinton and Trump will have to work hard to overcome their negative images in battleground states. Whoever can attract the most voters there will likely take the oath of office as president next January. ◆

With reporting by *The New York Times*

More Election This Fall:
- The VP candidates
- Electoral College
- How to read a poll

YOUR TURN What are the adults in your life saying about the candidates? Is it important to like someone you are voting for?

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