

CitizenVoice provides forum for proposition facts, debate

Web site founder Gary Dietrich strives to provide unbiased ballot knowledge

By [Theresa Avila](#)

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When Election Day arrives, voters will vote not only for the next president of the United States, but they will have to decide on 12 state propositions on the ballot as well.

The propositions vary widely, and students are turning to the Internet as a source of information.

A number of Web sites have popped up on the Internet which provide readers with ballot summaries and voter information guides.

One such Web site, CitizenVoice.org, was launched two weeks ago by Gary Dietrich, a UC Santa Barbara alumnus. The site aims to help voters make informed decisions at the polls by providing easy-to-understand summaries of the propositions in a nonpartisan fashion, Dietrich said. The summaries are also available in Spanish, he added.

There are videos of short debates on each of the propositions, with representatives from each side talking about why they support or are against the proposition.

The debates, which are moderated by Dietrich and typically run between 12-15 minutes, are a way in which voters can really understand the issues at hand, Dietrich said.

“When you got a full 10, 15 minutes, there’s nowhere really to hide. The rocks are pretty small you can hide under,” Dietrich said.

Though most students said they had not begun researching information on the propositions, most said they would probably do all of their research online.

One reason might be the availability and easy access available to students.

Vanessa Sanchez, a second-year undeclared student, said she believes the Internet is simply the most convenient resource for information available to students since most don’t have enough time to research the issues.

“I’m just a student going to class (and) working,” Sanchez said.

She was not the only student to say that the Internet would be the first stop for information. Most students said they would “Google it,” when searching for information on the propositions.

When asked about which information they would prefer, students said reputable sources with good summaries would be the best, though not everyone was keen on the idea of a longer debate style video.

“If it’s too long, people will probably skip over it. But on certain propositions, it’s really helpful. It’s good to have both sides,” said Lily Ventura, a first-year political science student, who has not used the CitizenVoice Web site.

Lauren Chinn, a first-year undeclared student, agreed, saying that she would only watch the videos if she was really interested.

“I would probably just read the summaries ... I don’t know about a 10-minute video,” Chinn said.

Some students said they thought the debates would help to provide necessary information but were still a bit cautious even after they were told that the information would come from a nonpartisan source.

“I’d be interested in the debates, but I would be careful and aware that it might be biased,” Sanchez said. “I think once I see the general idea, I might have a decision right then and there.”