Science Outreach in Election Season:
a How-To Guide at the State and Federal Level for Science Debate

Are you a student or scientist who wants to get involved in elections and policy? Science Debate is a great place to start – form a team to survey candidates for office on their science views and priorities to better inform all voters when they go to ballot box! Here’s how to get started:

Form a team! Schedule recurring check-ins
Develop candidate survey questions
• Identify science priorities of constituents (i.e., water quality)
• Split responsibility by question topic (e.g., infrastructure, public health) and region or Congressional district
• An NC Science Debate Team Example

Field input from non-profits, scientists, lawyers, and policy experts to shape final questions
• Ensure questions are fair, impartial, understandable, and relevant (no “gotcha” questions!)
• NC Science Debate’s Potential Partner Organizations

Send out surveys to candidates!
• Contact candidates in each race at same time
• Coordinate weekly follow-up emails, calls, and social media outreach
• Develop social media presence for outreach and publicizing results (Website, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
• Give candidates 2+ months to respond by Election Day

Publish Results!
• Provide open-access to results online
• Prepare op-eds to local news outlets and contact media to raise awareness

Share survey results to inform voters!

More Resources and Lessons Learned from the 2020 Science Debate North Carolina Team

For a summary of previous efforts, check out our NC Science Debate Team Results!
Keep questions simple and the questionnaire short! Be persistent asking candidates to complete the survey – phone calls most effective. NC publishes registered candidate lists with contact info, like most states!

Prepared for Science Rising by David Gorelick (UNC; degorelick@gmail.com), Ishita Kamboj (NCSU), and Melissa Varga (UCSUSA)