



Tracking politicians' promises

Citizens Rights Watch intends to review the promises made by politicians worldwide, and compare to the real work and achievements during their ruling mandate. Therefore, CRW welcomes any interested individuals with research and writing skills to make one page sheet about every country with bullet points, (Promise VS Actions).

Election promise

An election promise is a promise made to the public by a politician who is trying to win an election. Election promises are also notable for often being broken once a politician is in office.

Elections promises are part of an election platform, but platforms also contain vague ideals and generalities as well as specific promises. They are an essential element in getting people to vote for a candidate. For example, a promise such as to cut taxes or to introduce new social programs may appeal to voters.

The public perceive that a great number of election promises are broken. Many regard this as a severe issue that disaffects people from the entire political process, increasing apathy and lowering voter turnout. Election promises have been broken for as long as elections have been held and this is likely to continue, although defining what a broken promise is is hard. Popular cynicism and 24 hour media has increased the publics perception of 'lies' and broken promises since 1945, despite the actual amount of promises broken remaining roughly level at less than 20% over that time.

There are strong pressures on politicians to make promises which they cannot keep. A party that does not make exaggerated promises might appear bland, unambitious, and uninteresting to voters compared to the one that does. Sometimes this can give the exaggerating party an advantage over the truthful one. Government finances are extremely complex and promises are vague enough that the media and public can rarely say for certain that the numbers do not add up. Thus almost all parties continue to promise lower taxes, more social programs, and a balanced budget. For instance George W. Bush in the 2000 American presidential election promised all three and in the end abandoned balanced budgets. In the 2003 provincial election in Ontario, Canada, the Liberal Party also made all three promises and raised taxes once it found itself in government with an unbalanced budget.



Promises are usually based on the rosier of possible futures, a strong economy and cooperative leaders of legislatures and sub-national entities. Actual government planning done by bureaucrats generally plans for the worst possible future, but any politician that would plan in this manner would have a platform that is far less attractive than that of their opponents.

Election promises differ in different government systems. In the Westminster System, where almost all power resides in the office of the Prime Minister, voters know where to ascribe blame for broken promises. In presidential systems such as that in the United States, where power is more diffuse and ultimate responsibility harder to pin down, it is harder for an electorate to punish politicians for broken promises. For instance in the United States a presidential candidate can freely make promises of an impractically large tax cut in the firm confidence that the Senate will reduce it to a manageable level.

The constant stream of broken promises has annoyed many voters and politicians have responded with techniques to make their promises more believable. This includes making far more specific promises with numbers attached. Also popular is setting a more specific time for when promises will be implemented, with politicians listing what they will do in their first week or first hundred days in office.

When promises are to be broken, all politicians know it is best to do so at the start of a term. Thus, the first budget is the one most likely to see unexpected tax hikes or slashed spending. The hope is that by the time the next election occurs in a few years' time, the anger of the electorate will have faded.

Similarly politicians often save popular, but relatively unimportant promises, for the end of their term to be implemented just before they are up for reelection while the electors still remember them

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election_promise