

Help Undecided Voters Not Be Wrong

Eisenhower's Closing Argument to Undecided Voters

Eleven days before the 1952 election, Dwight Eisenhower needed to make a strong closing argument for his campaign and win over undecided voters. America was tired of the Korean War, which had lasted for two long years with no end in sight.



The challenge was how to navigate two major groups of voters—those who had initially supported the war and didn't want to feel like it was a waste and people who were frustrated with its current progress. Eisenhower decided to give a televised speech in Detroit that would do three things:

1. **Respect and honor the sacrifice already made by soldiers in Korea**, focusing on the moral duty of why they fought.
2. **Show what's changed and give voters a plan for the war's future**, including a commitment to go to Korea and assess the situation firsthand.
3. **Provide a path to peace free from blame**, focused on resolution and moving forward so both war supporters and critics could agree.

The speech became known as the **"I will go to Korea" speech**. It was highly successful, and Eisenhower received 55 percent of the vote.

Just four weeks after winning the election, Eisenhower went to Korea and assessed the situation on the ground. Six months later, the war ended with an armistice.

Eisenhower's strategy in 1952 provides a timeless template for addressing undecided voters.

In the last days of any campaign, it all comes down to voter turnout and persuading those final undecided voters. At the local level, there's often five to fifteen percent of the electorate who remain undecided up until the last moment.

But what really sways an undecided voter? While we may never know all the factors, one thing is certain: voters want to feel they're making the "right" decision. This desire for being right is so strong that many would rather leave a ballot blank than risk making a wrong choice.

You've probably experienced this when voting in a local race where you don't know any candidates. Do you leave it blank or make a guess?

Help Voters Feel Right

How do you help undecided voters feel confident in their choice?

The key is to provide a narrative that validates their past decisions while offering a compelling reason to support you now. Here's how to do it, following Eisenhower's example:

- 1 **Respect the Thinking**—Acknowledge the appeal of your opponent (or party) in the past
- 2 **Highlight What's Changed**—Express disappointment in how they've governed
- 3 **Show How to be Right Again**—Position yourself as the right choice moving forward

Crafting Your Message to Undecideds

Just as Eisenhower won over undecided voters by respecting past sacrifices, acknowledging changes, and offering a clear path forward, you can apply this same strategy in your campaign. This approach respects voters' intelligence and matches their desire to make the right choice, positioning you for success at the ballot box.

Here's an example of how to frame your message for independent voters who previously supported your opponent:

"When John Smith ran two years ago, he promised to be an independent voice for our community. Many of us hoped he'd live up to that promise in the capitol.

Respect the Thinking
Acknowledge the appeal of your opponent in the past

Unfortunately, he's voted with his party 95% of the time. He talks independent at home but can't resist party pressure in office.

Highlight What's Changed
Express disappointment in how they've governed

I'm running because we need someone who puts our town first, regardless of party politics. Someone who's focused on solving our local problems and is the same person at the corner store and in the capitol. I'd be honored to have your vote and represent you."

Show How to be Right Again
Position yourself as the right choice moving forward

Or you could even have a shorter version:

"John Smith campaigned as a moderate but hasn't lived up to that promise.

Respect the Thinking

He votes with the liberals 95% of the time.

Highlight What's Changed

We need someone who will put our town first, not their political party."

Show How to be Right Again

The Bottom Line

Your goal is to make voters feel their past decisions were correct while presenting a compelling case for change. By validating their previous choices and outlining a clear vision for the future, you can win the support of undecided voters in the final days of your campaign.