

Learning about Candidates and Issues: *Carlos Studies the Issues*

On September 18, Carlos took the Citizenship test after he had lived in the U.S. six years. He passed the test, and now he can vote. An election is coming up on the second Tuesday of November.

Carlos is excited to be a voter. He will help choose the future leaders of his city, state and country. But before he votes, he needs to learn about the candidates and some issues they support. He is confused.

He sees and hears many ads for candidates on TV, the radio and on-line. Carlos sees many lawn signs, bumper stickers and billboards for one particular candidate everyday. He knows this doesn't mean that this candidate is better than the other candidates. His friend tells him that this candidate has a lot of money to buy the ads.

On his way to class, Carlos sees a picture of a candidate for school board named Pedro Benavides. "I think I will vote for Pedro Benavides," Carlos tells his teacher, John. "He looks Latino, like me. He speaks Spanish. He will understand what is best for the Latino people"

John says, "Just because a candidate is from the same country as you, it doesn't mean that they have the same opinions you have. It is better to make a decision about the candidate's values and past record. Look at what the candidate says on issues that are important to you."

Then John asks, "What are the most important issues for you, Carlos?"

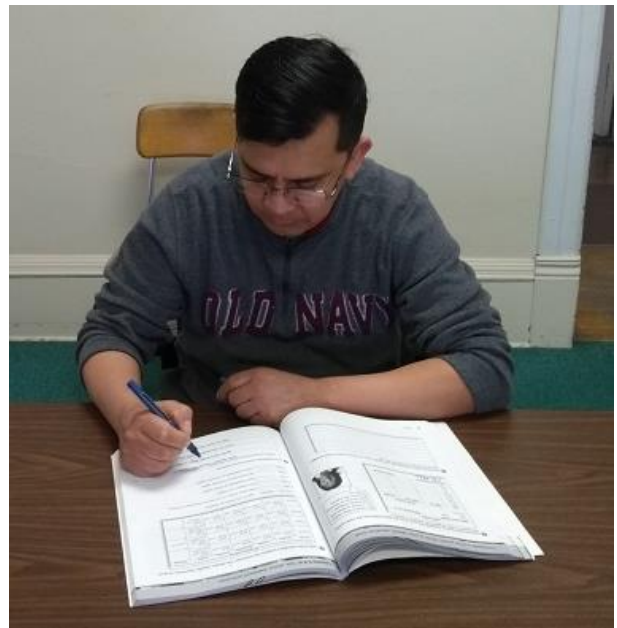
Carlos replies, "An important issue for me is getting a driver's license. Before I was a citizen, I couldn't get a Minnesota driver's license. I drove without a license. Luckily, I was never in an accident and never was stopped. When I became a citizen, I was able to get a driver's license. Now I have a Minnesota driver's license and feel much safer. The driver's license is also the identification I used to register to vote."

Carlos continued, "My brother doesn't have a Minnesota identification card or a driver's license, but he needs to drive to work. He can't get a driver's license or ID because of Minnesota law. I worry about him. If he gets arrested for driving without a driver's license, he might be deported."

John says, "The law on drivers' licenses is made by elected officials in the Minnesota government. You can find the opinions of your state Senator and Representative on this issue if you go to the candidate's web site, or to www.mnvotes.org or www.lwvmn.org.

"Some candidates will meet with groups of people or with individuals. You could try to meet with your Senator and Representative. Or you can go to a town meeting where candidates speak. You can ask their opinions about Minnesota driver's licenses then."

Carlos thinks that is a good idea. He will ask his brother to go to the town meeting with him, but Carlos will drive the car.



Questions for discussion: *Carlos Studies the Issues*

1. What did Carlos have to do to be eligible to vote?
2. What does Carlos know about the candidate who has the most TV and on-line ads, bumper stickers and billboards?
3. If candidates are the same gender or from the same country as you, do you think they will have the same values or opinions that you have? Explain your opinion.
4. What do you do to find information about candidates and their opinions? What more can you do?
5. Becoming a legal citizen and getting a driver's license were important issues for Carlos. What are important issues for you?