Typical Stories / Common Elements / Engaging Techniques

	Issue (example) Single-Payer Health Insurance System	Candidates	Fact-Checking	Events Rallies, Stump speeches, Fundraisers	Follow the $	Polls	Election Day
Background What You Should Know Before You Leave the Newsroom	1. Why is this an issue? 2. Who's affected? Number nationally / locally w/o insurance? 3. What difference does that make? 4. Cost of insurance? Increases? 5. Who pays & how? What's single-payer? 6. What countries have it? How affect costs, care?	1. Basic bio 2. Track record in office. 3. Friends / Enemies 4. Money: Where does it come from? How spending it? 5. Platform/ stands on issues, community concerns – What says now vs. what said before? 6. Opponents	1. Collect ads 2. Highlight assertions / accusations 3. Find experts / studies on each 4. What's special about this campaign, election? Determine balance of power on council, in legislature, in Congress? 5. What's special about the issue? Who does it affect?	1. Who, what, when, where 2. WHY? What's the importance of this place, group to the candidate's campaign? To the election?	1. State / federal laws & limits on campaign contributions. 2. Govt Databases on campaign donations: FEC / IRS / state board of elections 3. How to search databases / How to read the campaign finance reports 4. The jargon of campaign finance 5. Watchdog groups like (www.opensecrets.org)	1. Past polls 2. Who did it? 3. Purpose 4. Copy of the questions 5. Sample-size / time-frame / margin of error 6. Note use of buzzwords (push polling) 7. Does it ask why? 8. Anything going on that could skew the results?	1. Percent of vote counted. 2. Who won? Lost? Why? 3. Margins 4. Effect: Change balance of power? Change anything else in political landscape? 5. Turnout 6. Bring together the other stories: Issues, Candidates, Campaign, Turnout, Polls.
Questions	1. Pros/ Cons 2. From someone w/o insurance, how does this affect you?	1. Why running for this office? 2. What would you do about issues? Be specific!	1. Is this true? Fuzzy? False? 2. What's accurate?	1. Crowd size, make-up 2. What does candidate say? 3. Listeners' reactions.	1. Who's giving / how much/ why? 2. Connections to the candidate/ issue?	See above 1. WHY? Why did those polled answer the ways they did?	See above

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Sources Include experts, ordinary folks, the powerful and the voiceless. Look for diverse perspectives.	1. Local people without health insurance 2. Health Insurance industry 3. doctors /hospitals/ nurses 5. Advocates / opponents (local/national) 6. Doctors / patients in a single-payer system (Canada) 7. Local member of Congress, state legislature.	1. Friends/ enemies 2. Opponents 3. Aides, press secretary 4. Family 5. Polls 6. Voters who support/ oppose	1. Campaign for ads. 2. Web/ Nexis / scholars / government for studies / analysis 3. Experts / studies	1. Campaign staff/ office for logistics 2. Crowd 3. Candidate 4. Sponsor	1. Political scientists 2. Ex-elected officials 3. Donors, big & small 4. Watchdog groups 5. Candidate / campaign officials	1. Pollster 2. Experts / scholars / strategists 3. People in the poll or who reflect its findings.	1. Candidates 2. Strategists 3. Experts 4. VOTERS
Interviews/ Examples	1. Folks without insurance 2. opponents/ advocates	1. Candidate 2. Best of above 3. Political analysts	1. Experts / Scholars / analysts	Best of above	Same as above	Best of above	Best of above
Voices	Check the statistics: Reflect them with people.	Check the polls – reflect the numbers with people	1. Experts / Scholars / Analysts	1. Candidate 2. Voters / listeners	Same as above	Reflect the numbers with people.	Reflect the numbers with people.
Visuals	Graphics for stats, insurance claim form, video/nat sound in hospitals/ doc's office/ interviews	1. Candidate at work/home/play /campaign sites 2. Supporters/ opponents? 3. Analysts	1. Excerpts from ads 2. Graphics of studies	1. Crowd overviews 2. Close-ups of listeners, candidate	1. Interactive charts 2. Graphics 3. Bullet lists	Graphics for the numbers, scenes and interviews that highlight the findings.	Graphics for numbers, scenes from campaign, soundbites of concessions/ victory speeches, video of voters.

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Quirks Every story has special needs.	1. Complex / jargon/numbers = simplify, translate. 2. Emotional buzzwords: "government-run health care" – Take care to avoid or at least to define accurately	Spin – don't get dizzy from it. Remember: If your mother says she loves you, check it out.	These take courage – despite the spin, you have to be willing to say, "This is false."	1. Can look all the same, especially crowd scenes. 2. Tempting to avoid specifics, details. 3. Usually draws mostly supporters, so comments likely to be one-sided.	1. Very heavy with mind-numbing numbers = Use charts, graphics, bullet lists to simplify 2. Lots of jargon = translate into ordinary language	1. Polls are increasingly suspect – fewer folks want to answer. 2. They capture only a moment in time. 3. They can be WRONG. 4. They can be manipulated and manipulative: Push Polling. 5. They don't tell the whole story. 6. You must always tell the margin of error. 7. Be clear on ELIGIBLE or REGISTERED voters.	1. Strategists and candidates spin the meaning of the results too. 2. Be careful of overstating the meaning of the results. Winning isn't always a mandate.
Creativity This is your challenge as a storyteller & reporter – to find creative, powerful, engaging ways to convey the info and captivate audiences.	Example1: Tell through eyes of one person. Example2: Use interactive graphics for audience to work through issue / choices Example3: Create comparison charts of candidates' stands/promises	1. Day in Life 2. Candidate at dinner w/ voters 3. Defining Moments in Life: Where were you at 22 (MTV)? First vote? 4. Candidates through the eyes of others (family, aide, friend.)	Interactive graphics / Award catchy ratings like "Pinnochios" or "Pants on Fire"	1. Let the candidate talk at length – use long soundbites 2. Show event from perspective of one person in crowd. 3. Make into a version of Ad Check – verify or challenge the long soundbites.	1. Talk to donors = let them tell why they give 2. Track the expenditures 3. Track connections – do big donors get govt appointments? 4. Use lots of graphics to simplify the numbers	1. Let voters do the talking. Tell the poll through their eyes. 2. Ask WHY?	1. Spend election night with a candidate, a voter, at a precinct. Tell results from there, through their eyes. 2. Just be simple and straightforward: Here's who won and lost, folks.