Chapter 12

Politician Truth and Corruption Ratings

A **rating** is a (hopefully) reliable, objective measure of something. Industrialized societies thrive on ratings because they allow people to make better decisions more efficiently. People love to compare things using one simple number.

I can walk down the street and, if I wish, see dozens of ratings in action. There on the window of that famous restaurant is its Michelin Guide rating. It's three stars! If my friends and I dined there, we'd be guaranteed a meal fit for gastronomic royalty. As we entered, there on the wall, conspicuously posted, would be the restaurant's health inspection rating. It would be a perfect 100%, of course. After being seated, the sommelier would bring the wine list. If I'd done my homework, I'd be up to date on the Wine Spectator's ratings and might order their daily pick, the Australian Yellow Tail Moscato, said to be musky and floral, lingers on the finish. What I wouldn't tell the wine steward, nor anyone else, was that I'd also used the Wine Spectator's website to select the restaurant. After all, they had rated over thirty restaurants in my city on wine strength and cuisine. The one we were in now was the very best. How could we go wrong?

Ratings are everywhere. There are bond ratings, stock ratings, Neilson ratings, chess ranking ratings, school quality ratings, credit risk ratings, safety ratings for vehicles, hospital quality of care ratings, new car quality ratings, hiking trail difficulty ratings, mountain climb route difficulty ratings, FiveThirtyEight's pollster reliability ratings, and many more. Consumer Reports alone rates thousands of products a year for quality, using their 50 testing labs and 327-acre automotive test track.

But when it comes to the ratings citizens need the most, there aren't any.

The most important repeated decision you and I make is not which wine or car to buy. It's who to elect to run our government. That decision defines our social world, its rules, its services for citizens, and all the little things that define our potential quality of life.

But as explained earlier when constructing The Dueling Loops of the Political Powerplace model, the winning strategy is political deception. Most politicians lie quite a bit because it they didn't, they'd lose out to those who do. Sound decisions on who to vote for are anything but easy because our world is awash in spin. Voters simply cannot trust what politicians say, especially during campaign season when competition for votes is a matter of political life or death. So how can voters make rational decisions and avoid being manipulated without ever even knowing it?

One way, presented in the previous chapter, is Truth Literacy Training and its Personal Truth Test. But that only provides the fundamentals of truth literacy. A truth literate person can usually tell political truth from falsehood. But does the average voter have the time and ability to sample the speeches, ads, articles, and anything else a field of candidates has said or written to arrive at a reliable conclusion on their fitness for office, by applying the Personal Truth Test to each candidate in a thorough manner? Some do, but most do not. It's an impossible job to do as well as it should be done, just as it's impossible for the average person to study all the wines or cars available, in order to arrive at a reasonably optimal choice. Only experts can perform that role.

This is why Truth Literacy Training must be supplemented with Politician Truth Ratings.

Politician Truth Ratings

Politician Truth Ratings would provide an accurate measure of the truth of important statements made by politicians. First a government passes legislation creating Freedom from Falsehood. This makes lying by politicians to gain public support on elections or positions illegal. To efficiently implement the legislation, the government implements Politician Truth Ratings. All important elected officials then receive Truth Ratings, though it would take some time to ramp up the program. Campaign speeches, ads, articles, speeches once in office, and so on are rated for the truth of the arguments employed. This may seem like an expensive burden, but most arguments and facts are repeated. Only the first occurrence requires new work. In addition, everything need not be checked. A statistically valid sample will do.

It's possible that fines for excessive lying by politicians will be required. However, the most efficient penalty is not a fine. It is public knowledge a politician broke trust with the citizens of his or her country and lied. Once voters can see who they can and can't trust, that's where their votes will go. Which positions a politician supports also matter, like sustainably, health care, gun control, tax reform, etc. But what matters more than any of these is trust. Can a voter trust a politician to do what they claim they will do during a campaign? Once in office, can a voter trust that what a politician is saying is the truth?

Truth Ratings need not affect all voters to make the critical difference—only swing voters. Fortunately, it is this group who is most likely to be receptive to a tangible, sound reason to choose one politician over another.
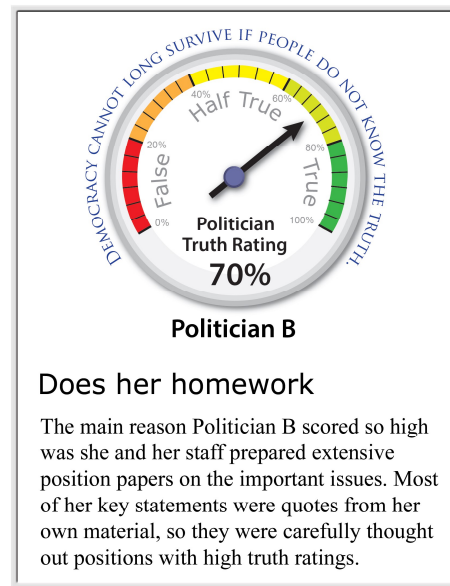
A **truth rating** is the probability a politician's important arguments are true. For example, a few days after a debate, its Truth Ratings would come out. They might say that candidate A averaged 45% true, while candidate B averaged 70%. Guess which candidate would probably win the debate in the public's mind? Or

suppose the two candidates averaged only a five-point difference in ratings. Then issue differences would determine who won. Or suppose one candidate said she had a plan for accomplishing something and the opposing candidate claimed the plan was faulty and would not work. The truth raters would examine the plan and rate it for probable effectiveness. That would enter the politician's Truth Ratings. Voters could look up the details behind the ratings if interested, and find out why the plan would or would not work, or why a particular statement was false.

Those doing the ratings would probably be certified rating organizations, ones with no conflict of interest and therefore non-profit. If an organization doing a series of ratings was credible and the public trusted the ratings, **The Public Loves Those They Can Trust** feedback loop (described later in this chapter) would begin. Politicians would compete to see who could be the most trustworthy and therefore the most helpful. While things would not be perfect, campaigns would become based on reason and truth rather than deception. As politicians began competing on the basis of the truth about what they can do for the common good, the **Race to the Top Among Politicians** feedback loop would go dominant and the health of democracy would be restored.

Here's an example of how Politician Truth Ratings could look:

It's a Close Race. Here are the Ratings:

Politician A

Too many fallacies

Analysis showed the main reason Politician A scored so low was flagrant use of popular fallacies. For example, "*You're either with us or against us*" is a false dilemma fallacy. You can also be undecided, neutral, or both a little for and a little against a policy.

Politician B

Does her homework

The main reason Politician B scored so high was she and her staff prepared extensive position papers on the important issues. Most of her key statements were quotes from her own material, so they were carefully thought out positions with high truth ratings.

Analysis findings: Ratings were prepared using PPKB argument analysis. A total of 370 important arguments (claims) were randomly selected for each candidate for the last five years. Since each politician made no more than 10,000 important statements during that period this gives a margin of error of plus or minus five percent. This is smaller than the 30% gap between the two politicians, so the rating difference is significant at the 95% level of confidence.

The fact checkers arrive!

Efforts to provide the beginnings of Politician Truth Ratings are springing up spontaneously. For example, in October of 2006 Eric Schmidt, chairman and CEO of Google predicted: [130]
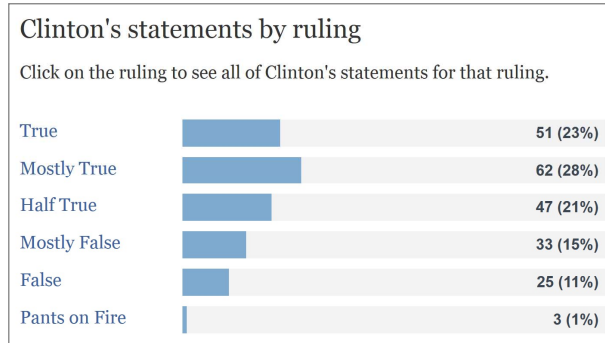
> …that, within five years, 'truth predictor' software would 'hold politicians to account.' Voters would be able to check the probability that apparently factual statements by politicians were actually correct, using programs that automatically compared claims with historic data.

Organizations like FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, Africa Check, FactCheckEU, Full Fact, TruthOrFiction.com, Vote Smart, Facts Fight Back, and Chequeado offer a variety of forms of fact checking. However, design of their product is not based on root cause analysis. There's no analysis of how to raise general ability to detect political deception in an efficient, prolonged manner with a tightly focused mechanism like Truth Ratings. Fact checking has had only modest impact. Important elections and decisions continue to be controlled by crafty deception.

A popular fact checking site is FactCheck.org, the pioneer in the field. Visiting their website on July 8, 2016, on the home page were articles on *Clinton's Handling of Classified Information, Trump's Fanciful Iran Negotiation,* and *Suspected Terrorists and Guns*. Reading the last one, it introduces the topic, then lists "some of the claims made by both sides in the debate." This is followed by a long thoughtful discussion of each claim and its truthfulness. But how many citizens are going to take the time to study these articles, which are not written for popular consumption, but for highly educated readers who love poring over the facts and logic behind a claim? This is not to fault FactCheck.org, which is making a difference.

What could make much more of a difference is Truth Ratings for each politician. These do not appear to be available. Clicking on 2016 Elections and then the first item, Hillary Clinton, brings up a page of articles about her. The first is *Revisiting Clinton and Classified Information*. This reads like the article described above. It's well written and researched, but who is going to read such a long technical article, with no clear concise conclusions? Some, but not many.

PolitiFact provides something closer to a Truth Rating. Going to Hillary Clinton's page on July 8, 2016, we found the image shown: [131]

Clinton's statements by ruling

Click on the ruling to see all of Clinton's statements for that ruling.

True		51 (23%)
Mostly True		62 (28%)
Half True		47 (21%)
Mostly False		33 (15%)
False		25 (11%)
Pants on Fire		3 (1%)

This is getting wonderfully close to Truth Ratings. At a glance you can see the approximate pattern of truth. But is there one number summarizing the data? No. This gives you no easy way to compare candidates. It's also impossible to accurately remember the truth level of a candidate. Instead you are forced to remember something like "clumped in mostly true."

The data is there to calculate a Truth Rating for Hillary. First, we have to set the scale. Let's set True = 100%, Mostly True = 75%, Half True = 50%, Mostly False = 30%, False = 15%, and Pants on Fire = 0%. A total of 221 statements were checked. The Truth Rating would be (51 x 1.00 + 62 x .75 + 47 x .50 + 33 x .30 + 25 x .15 + 3 x .00) / 221 = **61%**. That's all you need to know most of the time, though you can dig deeper for more detail. At this point in the presidential race, *Hillary Clinton had a Truth Rating of 61%.*

Or did she? All statements are not checked, so a question arises: Is the sample unbiased? That requires a random sample. PolitiFact doesn't take that approach. Here's what they do: [132]

Choosing claims to check – Every day, PolitiFact and PunditFact staffers look for statements that can be checked. We comb through speeches, news stories, press releases, campaign brochures, TV ads, Facebook postings and transcripts of TV and radio interviews. Because we can't possibly check all claims, we select the most newsworthy and significant ones. In deciding which statements to check, we ask ourselves these questions:

1. Is the statement rooted in a fact that is verifiable? We don't check opinions, and we recognize that in the world of speechmaking and political rhetoric, there is license for hyperbole.

2. Is the statement leaving a particular impression that may be misleading?

3. Is the statement significant? We avoid minor "gotchas" on claims that obviously represent a slip of the tongue.

4. Is the statement likely to be passed on and repeated by others?

5. Would a typical person hear or read the statement and wonder: Is that true?

While the procedure is documented and thoughtful, it's not a rigorously systematic, reproducible, unbiased procedure. In fact, large selection bias could creep in due to competing with other news sources to have "the most newsworthy and significant" checked claims. If it bleeds it leads. The screening questions also allow bias, though they adroitly eliminate non-arguments or irrelevant arguments.
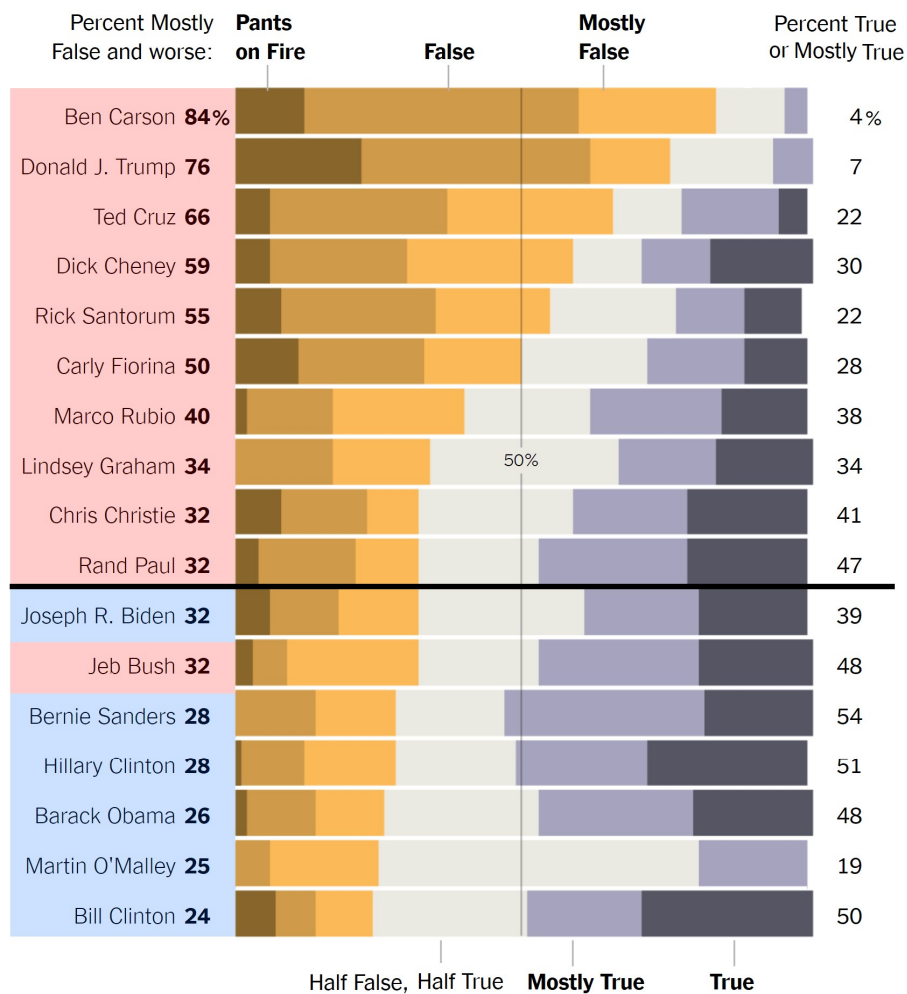
PolitiFact acknowledges this: "Our ratings are also not intended to be statistically representative but to show trends over time." [133] Overall, PolitiFact's work is a terrific start. I expect that unbiased, accurate, affordable Truth Ratings for all politicians will not fully arrive until they can be computer analyzed and calculated. This requires advanced AI (artificial intelligence). Meanwhile we can do what PolitiFact is doing, with improvement as needed.

Fact checking organizations are breaking new ground. Step by courageous step they are bringing truth checking to the forefront of journalism. The best overall example I found was a graphic in a New York Times article, *All Politicians Lie. Some Lie More Than Others*. The article discussed PolitiFact's findings on the 2016 US presidential election race so far, highlighting the role of journalists in making voters more truth literate: [134]

> Today's TV journalists — anchors like Chuck Todd, Jake Tapper and George Stephanopoulos — have picked up the torch of fact-checking and now grill candidates on issues of accuracy during live interviews. Most voters don't think it's biased to question people about whether their seemingly fact-based statements are accurate. Research published earlier this year by the American Press Institute showed that more than eight in 10 Americans have a positive view of political fact-checking.
>
> In fact, journalists regularly tell me their media organizations have started highlighting fact-checking in their reporting because so many people click on fact-checking stories after a debate or high-profile news event. Many readers now want fact-checking as part of traditional news stories as well; they will vocally complain to ombudsmen and readers' representatives when they see news stories repeating discredited factual claims.

On the next page is the amazing graphic presented in the article.

	Pants on Fire	False	Mostly False	Percent True or Mostly True
Percent Mostly False and worse:				
Ben Carson **84**%				4%
Donald J. Trump **76**				7
Ted Cruz **66**				22
Dick Cheney **59**				30
Rick Santorum **55**				22
Carly Fiorina **50**				28
Marco Rubio **40**				38
Lindsey Graham **34**		50%		34
Chris Christie **32**				41
Rand Paul **32**				47
Joseph R. Biden **32**				39
Jeb Bush **32**				48
Bernie Sanders **28**				54
Hillary Clinton **28**				51
Barack Obama **26**				48
Martin O'Malley **25**				19
Bill Clinton **24**				50

Half False, Half True   **Mostly True**   **True**

"**Falsehood Face-Off** – Statements since 2007 by presidential candidates (and some current and former officeholders) ranked from most dishonest over all to least dishonest, as fact-checked by PolitiFact. 'Pants on Fire' refers to the most egregious falsehoods. Too few statements have been fact-checked to include Jim Gilmore, George E. Pataki and George W. Bush. The number of statements analyzed varies for each person. Some bars total more or less than 100% because of rounding. Source: PolitiFact. [Graphic] By Bill Marsh/The New York Times"

This is an excellent graphic based on excellent data. It was slightly modified for readability. "Half False, Half True" was moved from the top to the bottom to allow "Percent True or Mostly True" to be a column head. The line between Rand Paul and Joseph Biden was added. Red and blue was added to denote Republicans and Democrats. Except for Jeb Bush, all Republicans are above the line and all Democrats are below it. The data show that for US presidential candidates since

2007, Republicans employ a much higher amount of political deception than Democrats, about double.

This pattern confirms several hypotheses in The Dueling Loops of the Political Powerplace model: (1) Over time, politicians will evolve into two main groups: those in the Race to the Top and the Race to the Bottom, the left and the right, due to the inherent advantage of the Race to the Bottom. (2) Those in the Race to the Bottom will tend to support issues and ideologies favorable to powerful special interests, notably *Corporatis profitis* and the rich. (3) Since special interests are a minority, the only way to convince a majority to vote for them and support their positions is deception. Reliance on political deception is thus the principle strategy of the Race to the Bottom. (4) In contrast, the Race to the Top will tend to support issues and ideologies favorable to the common good, which is the majority. (5) This is best done by reliance on the truth.

The PolitiFact data strongly confirms all five hypotheses. In the US, Republicans align with large for-profit corporations and the rich. Democrats align with the middle class and the poor, and common good causes like progressive taxation, racial equality, universal health care, unions, minority rights, gun control, environmental sustainability, etc. Republicans rely on a high rate of deception, while Democrats rely on a high rate of the truth.

However, we need to be cautious. The graphic data was not collected using a random sample and could be biased. Thus we only have tentative confirmation of the hypotheses. Still, the confirmation is dramatic.

The graphic almost has a measure of Truth Ratings. The right column of numbers is percent true or mostly true. That's a rough Truth Rating. However, it's not as accurate as it needs to be if voters are to rely on it as a major decision-making tool. Deceptive politicians must be prevented from gaming the system and achieving unwarranted higher ratings. Any significant bias can be manipulated. If arguments are not weighted for importance in terms of future impact then a deceptive politician can utter lots of unimportant claims that are true, a few important ones that are false, and end up with an unjustified high rating. The ratings should be the running average of a period of time, such as the last five or ten years. The previous election campaign should always be included. Experimentation will determine what works best.

A Politician Truth Ratings example

The fact-checking industry is tantalizingly close to producing Politician Truth Ratings so that politicians can be quickly compared. For example, consider this graphic, which uses a scale of zero to four Pinocchios:

How the candidates' fact check rankings break down

Source: *The Washington Post*, October 4, 2016.

Of Clinton's 46 rated statements   Of Trump's 77 rated statements
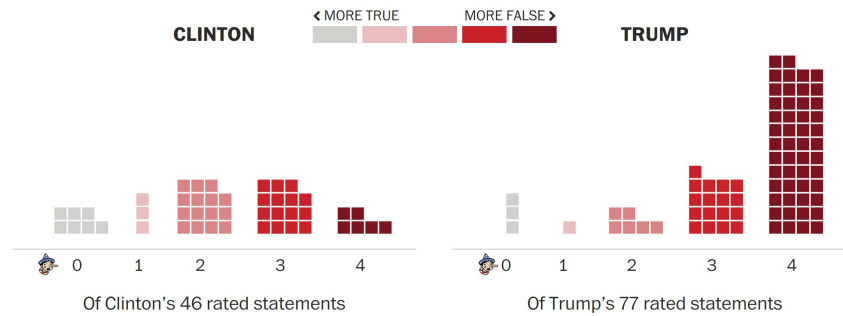
Except for the fact (pun intended) that the claims were not randomly sampled, all the data we need to calculate a Truth Rating for both candidates is there. First we translate the scale from zero to four Pinocchios to a zero to 100% confidence level of truthfulness. Zero Pinocchios = 100% true, 1 Pinocchio = 75%, 2 Pinocchios = 50%, 3 Pinocchios = 25%, and 4 Pinocchios = 0%. For Clinton, the rating would be (7 x 1.00 = 7) + (3 x .75 = 2.25) + (15 x .5 = 7.5) + (15 x .25 = 3.75) + (6 x 0 = 0) = 20.5. That's for 46 statements. Converting to 100 statements, 20.5 x (100/46) = **44.56**. For Trump, (3 x 1.00 = 3) + (1 x .75 = .75) + (6 x .5 = 3) + (17 x .25 = 4.25) + (50 x 0 = 0) = 11. That's for 77 statements. Converting to 100 statements, 11 x (100/77) = **14.29**. Clinton's rating is three times as high as Trumps, an enormous difference.

Now suppose the article had used the calculations to produce this graphic:

How the candidates' fact check rankings break down

Source: *The Washington Post*, October 4, 2016. Ratings added by Thwink.org.

Of Clinton's 46 rated statements   Of Trump's 77 rated statements
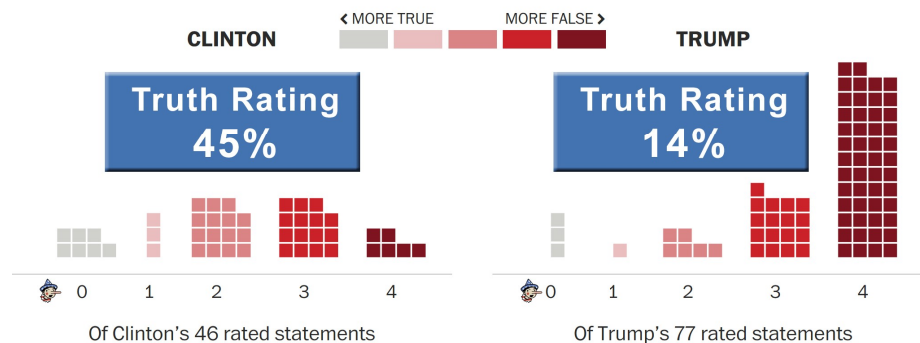
What's the real story here? The gigantic difference between the two ratings. Of the two graphics, which one tells that story better? Which story is easier to remember many months later, which you are standing in the voting booth?

Now let's examine the second solution element in this chapter.

Politician Corruption Ratings

A **Politician Corruption Rating** is an overall measure of how corrupt a politician is. Corruption includes favoritism, coercion, abuse, criminal activity, the giving or accepting of bribes, knowledge that corruption is going on, and so on. Corruption excludes deception, since Politician Truth Ratings measures that.

Corruption Ratings would need to be done regularly, perhaps every two years. The running average of the last ten years or so would be a politician's rating. Corruption Ratings would become as routine and cost about as much as a high-level security check.

This chapter has described Politician Truth Ratings in some detail. Corruption Ratings would be created in a similar manner.

The analogy of credit ratings

Politician Truth Ratings and Corruption Ratings are both forms of **Trust Ratings** and are analogous to credit ratings. To demonstrate how important credit ratings have become in just one area, the corporate bond market, here is an excerpt from testimony presented to the US Senate on March 20, 2002, to the Committee on Governmental Affairs, chaired by Senator Joe Lieberman: [135] (Italics added)

> Simply put, a credit rating is an assessment of a company's credit worthiness or its likelihood of repaying its debt.
>
> John Moody, the founder of what is now Moody's Investors Service, is recognized for devising credit ratings in 1908 for public debt issues, mostly railroad bond issues. Moody's credit ratings, first published in 1909, met a need for *accurate, impartial, and independent information*.
>
> Now, almost a century later, an 'investment grade' credit rating has become an absolute necessity for any company that wants to tap the resources of the capital markets. The credit raters hold the key to capital and liquidity, the lifeblood of corporate America and of our capitalist economy. The rating affects a company's ability to borrow money; it affects whether a pension fund or a money market fund can invest in a company's bonds; and it affects stock price. *The difference between a good rating and a poor rating can be the difference between success and failure, prosperity and bad fortune.*

In a similar manner, the difference between a good politician rating and a poor one would be the difference between success and failure for politicians, and prosperity and bad fortune for the public.

But even more interesting is the testimony went on to say:

The government—through hundreds of laws and regulations—*requires corporate bonds to be rated* if they're to be considered appropriate investments for many institutional investors.

So too would the government require politicians to be rated if they were to be considered appropriate choices for many citizens. *Credit ratings* greatly lower the risk of financial loss. *Trust Ratings* would greatly lower the risk of a dominant **Race to the Bottom among Politicians**. If they proved as successful as credit ratings, they would lower it by somewhere around 99%, which would make sizeable cases of a dominant Race to the Bottom about as frequent as Halley's Comet.

Presently Trust Ratings are not required but corporate bond ratings are. This is one more example of how, over the centuries, *Corporatis profitis* has silently defined the rules of the game to be in its favor. The reason we don't already have something like Trust Ratings is that would prevent exploitation of the inherent weakness in the Race to the Bottom by *Corporatis profitis*.

How Trust Ratings work dynamically

Like all deep structural change, Trust Ratings would cause important new feedback loops to become dominant, as modeled below.

The Dynamic Structure of Politician Trust Ratings
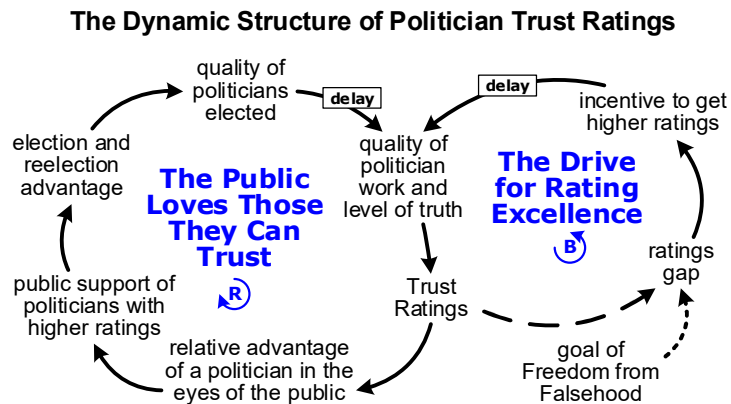
Causal loop diagram for Politician Trust Ratings. Once the goal of Freedom from Falsehood exists, the two loops are activated. The two loops work together to cause Trust Ratings to soar from low to high.

The key loop is **The Drive for Rating Excellence**. This is probably the most important feedback loop in the entire effort to push on the high leverage point of raise general ability to detect political deception. If it works the whole solution will probably work. The loop works like this:

At first <u>Trust Ratings</u> are low. The <u>goal of Freedom from Falsehood</u> requires high ratings, so the <u>ratings gap</u> starts out high. The gap equals the goal minus <u>Trust Ratings</u>. Because the gap is high so is the <u>incentive to get higher ratings</u>, since the public uses ratings as a prime criteria for decisions on which politicians to support. The way to get higher ratings is to tell *and implement* more of the truth, which increases <u>quality of politician work and level of truth</u>. This causes <u>Trust Ratings</u> to increase, which causes the <u>ratings gap</u> to *decrease*. The loop goes round and round, as it homes in on its goal.

Politicians drive the loop on the right. The public drives the loop on the left, named **The Public Loves Those They Can Trust**. The loop works like this:

At first <u>Trust Ratings</u> are low. They vary from politician to politician and would be embarrassingly bad for some. Those with higher ratings, especially in aspects important to particular voters, have a <u>relative advantage of a politician in the eyes of the public</u>. This causes <u>public support of politicians with higher ratings</u> to increase. That in turn increases their <u>election and reelection advantage</u>. That causes the <u>quality of politicians elected</u> to go up. After a delay, that will cause <u>quality of politician work and level of the truth</u> to also go up. That causes <u>Trust Ratings</u> to rise, and we're back where we started.

The two loops drive the level of trust up until it's high. At some point that causes the desired mode change in The Dueling Loops of the Political Powerplace. The Dueling Loops flip from a dominant **Race to the Bottom** to a dominant **Race to the Top**, because politicians are telling the truth more and more of the time. Once <u>Trust Ratings</u> goes high, the **Race to the Top** becomes totally dominant as modeled in simulation Run 14 on page 156, also shown below. (Run 22 also shows the problem solved, but that graph is not as clear as Run 14. The two graphs have identical outcomes.)

In this run general ability to detect deception is 80%, a fairly high level. 80% of false memes are detected. A significantly higher level is probably not be possible, due to the sophistication of some falsehoods and the fact that it's simply not possible to inoculate the entire population against deception. But that's okay. The graph shows how even with only 80% general ability to detect political deception, percent rationalists rises to 100%. It's essentially a perfect solution.

The root cause of change resistance, *the inherent advantage of the Race to the Bottom*, has been resolved. The Race to the Bottom no longer enjoys an advantage because the solution has caused general ability to detect political deception to change from low to high. Instead, it's the **Race to the Top** that now enjoys an inherent advantage. That advantage comes from the newly introduced feedback loops.

Run 14. 4.7 FM size, 80% ability, 20% repulsion

Fig. 17

percent rationalists

rationalists

neutralists

degenerates
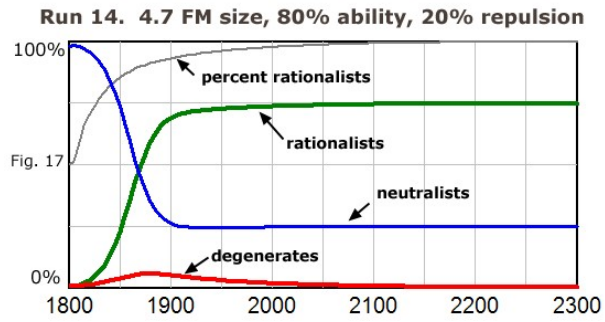
This is deep, lasting, social system engineering change, and is the perfect example of the potential of social system engineering.