



Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH

Guidelines for Advocacy and Political Participation for Pastors and Ministry Leaders

Let us pray for the courage and the honesty to speak the truth, no matter how high the cost is to ourselves. We belong to the Lord, in him is our strength, and through his grace, we can change the world.

Each election season, Catholics ask what their parishes can do to promote civic participation while avoiding partisan electioneering. The Texas bishops offer these guidelines to encourage the laity to live out their baptismal call by putting their faith into political action. In collaboration with that principle, the clergy and ministry leaders of Catholic parishes and organizations should assist the laity in their conscience formation and not advocate for a specific candidate or party.

What role do Texas bishops take during elections?

The Catholic faith is not a means to a political end. Our faith does have implications for political, economic, and social policies; however, the Texas bishops do not tell Catholics how to vote by endorsing any candidates or political party. Instead, they call upon the faithful to view political debates from the perspective of Catholic moral theology and social doctrine. Catholics should be guided by a well-formed conscience, not party affiliation.

Why don't the bishops issue a voter's guide?

It is not the Church's role to endorse or oppose specific political candidates or parties. These are temporal questions that God has given to the free and responsible judgment of each person. It is, however, the Church's duty to provide a moral judgment on temporal matters when this is required by faith or moral law.

How can Catholics form their consciences? The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' seminal document, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, helps us view politics through the lens of our faith. *Faithful Citizenship* states we form our consciences in these ways:

1. Begin by being open to the truth and searching for what is right.
2. Study Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Church, and other authoritative teachings of the Church.
3. Examine the facts and background information about various political choices.
4. Prayerfully reflect to discern the will of God.
5. Seek the prudent advice and good example of others.
6. Use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to develop your conscience.
7. Regularly examine your conscience.

As Catholics, we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on an intrinsic evil, such as abortion, euthanasia, or racist behavior, should weigh heavily in a voter's discernment, as Catholics may never support a candidate with the intent of advancing such a position. Simultaneously, no single position, by itself, qualifies or disqualifies a candidate from a voter's support. Voters are called to discern conscientiously among the choices before them, considering the relevant moral issues and circumstances, including a candidate's official capacity to act on those issues, in light of the dignity of the human person and the common good.

To understand current issues before the Texas Legislature and in the State of Texas, please visit txcatholic.org.



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To learn more, visit txcatholic.org or the USCCB's website (links below). If you have questions or want printed information in English or Spanish, please contact TCCB staff at 512-339-9882, or email info@txcatholic.org.

Pastors and ministry leaders *can* engage as follows:

- Educate and encourage advocacy on issues. For example: Educate Catholics about specific legislation using TCCB materials.
- Encourage Catholics to contact legislators to comment on legislation.
- Preach about protecting the sanctity of life, preserving the dignity of migrants, serving the poor, and maintaining religious liberty.
- Host nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns.
- Distribute civic or issue advocacy materials which emphasize educational objectives. *While all such materials must be approved by your local bishop, below is a list of resources from the USCCB:*
 - [Faith Before Politics](#)
 - [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#)
 - [Civilize It: A Better Kind of Politics](#)
 - [Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#) (with bilingual resources)
- Join the Texas Catholic Advocacy Network at txcatholic.org to stay updated on calls to action and statewide advocacy work.

Pastors and ministry leaders *should not*:

- Publicly support groups which are not approved by your local bishop.
- Support multi-issue coalitions which advocate for issues that are absolutely prohibited by Church teaching.
- Personally endorse candidates or parties, keeping in mind that people may not be able to recognize that you are not speaking as a representative of the Church.
- Endorse or fundraise for candidates, parties, or Political Action Committees (PACs). This includes:
 - Encouraging parishioners to vote for or against a particular candidate or party.
 - Labeling a candidate or party as “pro-school choice,” “anti-life,” “anti-immigrant,” etc.
 - Issuing voters guides rating candidates or providing marked sample ballots.
 - Using parish or school facilities for candidate or party campaign events
 - Posting signs or distributing materials supporting a candidate on parish or school property.
 - Inviting candidates, parties, or PACs to address parishes during campaign season.

The Role of the Bishops

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