

IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Faithful Citizenship For Iowa Catholics

In Scripture we hear that we are to love our neighbor as Christ has loved us (John 13:34). We become Christ's disciples, joining in his mission to bring "good news to the poor, liberty to captives, new sight to the blind, and to set the downtrodden free" (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6).

As Catholics, we receive the Body and Blood of Christ and then go out to live as Eucharist in the world. We don't believe in separating our faith from making decisions in everyday life. Therefore it is important we form our consciences rightly with the Church as our authentic guide. This helps us judge how to best take action on behalf of the poor and vulnerable. This can include charitable activity, advocacy on issues, and voting.

As we form our consciences, we should make use of reliable resources. Jesus Christ teaches us in Scripture and Tradition, and through the Church in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, and statements from the pope, individual bishops, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All of these can provide a foundation for the informed judgment that faithful citizenship requires. Finally, prayer and a willingness to say "yes" to God in all things are indispensable parts of the formation of conscience.

"In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation."

*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

A BASIC TEST OF PUBLIC POLICY IS WHETHER IT SUPPORTS OR THREATENS HUMAN LIFE

From the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we affirm that the God-given, unalienable dignity of each human person is the foundation and purpose of social and political life. Some issues, such as abortion and euthanasia, involve acts that are always wrong because they directly and intentionally take innocent human life. We see life as priceless, and belonging to God. We reject the idea that some lives – for example, the unborn, the disabled, the elderly, and the poor around the world – are not worthy of protection.

It follows that a fundamental test of the morality of public policy is whether it supports or threatens human life and the common good. The "common good" means those things that are necessary for a genuinely human life: life itself, the ability to act according to one's conscience, safe food, clean

water and air, shelter, education, health care, peace and security, and a place to work. These are the “goods” we hold in common with each other, and receive in the same way.

What would our society look like if policies enacted by Congress or the state legislature more closely reflected Catholic social teaching about attaining the common good?

BUT HOW SHOULD I VOTE?

The Church does not tell people which candidates to vote for. Rather, the U.S. bishops say in their Faithful Citizenship document that voting “is a decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching.” The bishops’ role is to help us form our consciences in the light of Church teaching so we will make sound moral judgments.

“...the God-given, unalienable dignity of each human person is the foundation and purpose of social and political life.”

You must be guided by your moral convictions, not your self-interest or your attachment to a political party or interest group. Very few advocate for both the poor and the unborn. If we do so, hopefully our leaders will follow! Our faith offers us the opportunity to make a unique contribution in our society, particularly in support of the needy and the marginalized. We encourage you to take your faith with you everywhere, including the voting booth.

ASK THESE QUESTIONS OF CANDIDATES IN IOWA

A list of candidates is available through the Iowa Catholic Conference. An affirmative answer to the following questions would be consistent with the positions of the Conference and the Church.

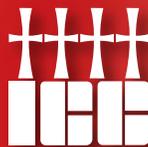
Do you support:

- Protecting and supporting human life from conception until natural death?
- Prohibiting “webcam” abortions?
- Maintaining Iowa’s ban on euthanasia/assisted suicide?
- Rejecting all initiatives to compromise the First Amendment and its guarantee of religious freedom and any imposition by government in authentic religious beliefs and practices as well as rejecting unjust laws that impinge on legitimate exercise of the freedom of conscience?
- Financial assistance for parents who wish to send their children to a nonpublic school?
- Legislation that helps all immigrants provide for their families and become participating members of their communities?
- Initiatives that would make health care more readily available and affordable to all Iowans, including immigrants and their children?
- Maintaining Iowa’s status as a “no death penalty” state?
- Amending Iowa’s Constitution to recognize marriage as a union of one man and one woman?
- A fair and just tax system, a just living wage and fair and reasonable labor practices by employers?
- Measures to preserve, protect, and improve the quality of the air, water, and land in Iowa?

JOIN THE IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE LEGISLATIVE NETWORK

You can keep updated on issues in Iowa by receiving regular newsletters and action alerts from the Iowa Catholic Conference. Click on “**Join the Network**” at www.iowacatholicconference.org or at www.facebook.com/iowacatholicconference.

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/iacatholicconf.



CONTACT THE IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE - The public policy voice of the bishops of Iowa.

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This material is intended to serve an educational purpose and is not intended to support, endorse or oppose any candidate or political party.