

*A Call to Holiness:
A 2018 Guide for Voters*

***“A good Catholic meddles in politics.”
Pope Francis***

Introduction

Since our last national election, the people of the United States have seen growing political divides, widening economic disparity, and increasing instances of bigotry, hate, and violence often done in the name of patriotism. At the same time, we've seen communities across the country come together in support of the values of our faith and our nation.

As Catholics, we are called to carefully consider the many critical issues facing our nation. Pope Francis reminds us, "We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty."

This election, Catholic voters have a choice to make. Catholic Social Teaching directs us to participate in public life and exercise our civic duty. Let us engage ourselves and others this election season and choose the path of the common good, to seek a better life for everyone.

How to use this guide:

We hope this guide will help us all apply longstanding Catholic teaching to the most pressing issues of our time. The 2018 Election comes in the context of deep reflection on where we are going as a country. It is critical that we examine candidates' positions on the multiple and interrelated policies that defend the dignity of all God's people. We must also address these issues with a commitment to civility and dialogue in pursuit of the common good.

For each issue outlined below, we provide a synopsis and questions to guide your candidate research and discernment. If a public statement from a candidate is not available to answer the questions, consider writing a direct letter or raising them in a public forum.

Racial Justice

Racism is very much alive in our nation, in our communities, and even in our churches. Racism and white supremacy are embedded in many social structures – tax codes, school districts, the criminal justice system, housing, wages, war, immigration, and the allocation of federal resources. We are called as Catholics to reject structural racism as a grave injustice and affront to human dignity. We need new policies that dismantle white supremacist structures that produce and reproduce race-based inequalities.

- Will the candidate work to reverse the disenfranchisement of people of color by supporting the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, increase funding for the 2020 Census, and enact policies that reform the criminal justice system and end the cradle to prison pipeline?
- Does the candidate reject the militarization of our police force, and will they be an outspoken critic of police brutality against people of color?
- Has the candidate publicly challenged instances of racial discrimination, and will they legislate to uphold the dignity of all people?

The Economy

Pope Francis calls us to reject an economy of exclusion, both domestically and internationally. The current U.S. income and wealth gap perpetuates inequality and poverty that disproportionately affects women and people of color. Poverty is the direct result of unjust wage laws, unequal pay for women, lack of federal paid family leave, systematic attacks on labor unions and rights, the role of money in politics, and more. Additionally, legislators have chosen tax policies that favor corporations and the wealthiest in our nation while they attempt to defund and dismantle the successful federal programs that create the social safety net.

- Did the candidate oppose the tax legislation passed by Congress which advantaged the wealthy and corporations? Do they reject the outsized influence of money in politics? Do they have a plan to undo the damage of the tax law that widens wealth inequality?

- Will the candidate protect the social safety net? Do they oppose additional burdensome work requirements that act as barriers to access for low-income individuals and families? Will they support government assistance to ensure that basic needs such as food, housing, education, peace, and health are met?
- Does the candidate support international trade policy that creates jobs and improved education for people around the world, especially with respect to undoing the damage of NAFTA?

Immigration and Refugees

Our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger and love our neighbor. As Catholics who believe in the sanctity of all life, we must not be complicit in the suffering of migrants living in fear and of children separated from their families. We must build bridges, not walls, and must evaluate candidates' support for reforming an unjust immigration system and refugee policy. This includes solutions for immigrants already residing in the U.S. and must address the root causes of migration that forces people to flee violence in their home countries.

- What has each candidate said about the injustice in our immigration system? Do they support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants? Do they support an increase of the number of refugees for resettlement in our country?
- Has the candidate made any statements opposing family separation at our border and/or family detention? Do they reject funding for additional border wall? Do they believe the U.S. should end funding for private for-profit prison detention? Does the candidate instead focus on providing alternatives to detention?
- Does the candidate recognize the importance of protecting asylum seekers fleeing domestic or gang violence? Do they agree that no asylum seekers should be deported at least without a hearing? Do they place emphasis on evaluating the root causes of forced migration?

Healthcare

Healthcare is a human right, and our faith requires us to act as our sisters' and brothers' keepers. All people should have access to quality, affordable, and equitable care, including those with complex medical needs or preexisting conditions. The Affordable Care Act was an important first effort to meet the right to healthcare for all. Our current law must be protected and strengthened to build on the successes of the ACA, even while we work to address its limitations.

- Does the candidate reject efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act? Do they oppose the creation of “brass-level” junk insurance plans that provide lesser coverage under the guise of the ACA?
- Will the candidate protect coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, funding for health insurance navigators, Medicaid expansion, and assistance to reduce abortions? Are they committed to upholding and protecting pieces of current law while working for every person to have access to health care?

Gun Violence Prevention

As followers of the nonviolent Jesus, we deplore the increasing rate of gun-related deaths in our country. Mass shootings inspire momentary outcries, which fail to result in meaningful legislative action. Daily homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, and injuries by guns often go unnoticed except by grieving families and communities.

- Do the candidates follow the lead of young people in the March for Our Lives by rejecting contributions from the National Rifle Association?
- Do candidates support legislation to at least ban assault weapons and high capacity ammunition? Will they expand and strengthen background checks? Do they support increased oversight and regulation of concealed and open-carry laws? Do they oppose 3-D printer (plastic) guns?
- Do candidates support investing in unarmed programs to prevent violence?

Global Peacemaking

We recognize the dignity of all people as children of God, even if we abhor acts of injustice and violence. As Catholics who follow the way of Jesus, we are called to focus on nonviolence and just peace. We support effective practices such as restorative justice, trauma-healing, and nonviolent resistance, etc. As wars continue to fuel violence in our world, we reject that global leadership is based on military might, and the profiteering from the arms trade and the military industrial complex. During war, the earth and people living in poverty suffer the most from death, displacement, and disease.

- Does the candidate support increasing funding for diplomacy, peacebuilding, and development, while also cutting Pentagon spending and nuclear weapons?
- Does the candidate support ending the wars in Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, and the DRC? Does the candidate support diplomacy with Iran and Palestinian rights?

The Environment

Our faith calls us to be stewards of God's creation and to ensure that creation thrives for future generations. Pope Francis invites us to an ecological conversion within our own hearts and among our political leaders. We currently face the existential threat of climate change, species loss, and toxic chemical exposures that affect ecosystems and communities on a local and global scale. We are challenged by a rollback of environmental policies at the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Interior, and the State Department.

- Does the candidate support the Paris climate agreement and a shift to green energy?
- Does the candidate support increased funding for environmental cleanups in municipalities like Flint, MI, where people lack access to clean drinking water? Do they support funding to ensure clean drinking water and sanitation in developing countries?
- Does the candidate oppose efforts to expand mining and drilling for oil or gas? Do they oppose drilling off the Atlantic Coast, on or near sacred land of indigenous

communities, or protected areas like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Respect for the First Amendment: Freedom of Religion and Conscience

As Catholics we share a common faith teaching. But as voters in the United States, we come together with people from a variety of faith and secular traditions to ensure that our elected leaders uphold our Constitutional rights and hold firm against discriminatory policies motivated by religious animosity.

- Does the candidate oppose the travel ban that prevents people from Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S.?
- Does the candidate demonstrate a big-picture understanding of the gravity of Supreme Court vacancies, weighing nominees not just on a single-issue, but on the impact they would have on the long-term direction of the court?
- Does the candidate have a thoughtful position that upholds both religious liberty and our responsibility to others?



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