

“In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. All believers are called to faithful citizenship, to become informed, active, and responsible participants in the political process.

“We encourage all citizens, particularly Catholics, to embrace their citizenship not merely as a duty and privilege, but as an opportunity meaningfully to participate more fully in building the culture of life. Every voice matters in the public forum. Every vote counts. Every act of responsible citizenship is an exercise of significant individual power.

“Our responsibility is to measure all candidates, policies, parties, and platforms by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity, and rights of the human person—whether they protect the poor and vulnerable and advance the common good.” (Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call To Political Responsibility — November 2003)

We as Catholics must become informed about issues, communicate our positions to elected officials, register to vote, and vote according to a properly formed conscience.

While the Catholic Church often speaks to issues that are both moral and

political, it directs its attention to the issues, not to political parties or candidates.

All activities of the Church, (and its parishes, schools and affiliated organizations) in the political arena must conform to the requirements of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This prohibits tax-exempt organizations from participating or intervening in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

While we are aware that other tax-exempt organizations may not always abide by the law, we, as Church, are committed to obeying the law.



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Parish Guidelines for Political Activity

Pope John Paul II's visit to the United States in the Fall of 1995 was a powerful reminder for Catholics that we are called to stand up in defense of life in all arenas, including the political arena. The Holy Father called each of us to genuine political responsibility.

“Democracy serves what is true and right when it safeguards the dignity of every human person, when it respects inviolable and inalienable human rights, when it makes the common good the end and criterion regulating all public and social life.”

**Pope John Paul II
New York, October 7, 1995**

The lists at right serve as a summary of the principle “dos and don’ts” of political activity for tax exempt organizations. A more complete explanation of the regulations governing 501(c)(3) organizations is available from the Kansas Catholic Conference.

Neither these guidelines nor any other church document should be used to endorse candidates or otherwise instruct people how to vote on candidates, nor to inhibit Catholics, acting as private citizens, from partisan political activity. Any questions which may arise should be referred to the Chancery Office of your Diocese or the Kansas Catholic Conference, 6301 Antioch, Merriam, KS 66202, (913) 722-6633. More detailed information on these guidelines can be found on-line at www.nccbuscc.org/ogc.

“...You are called to stand up for life. You are called to defend the mystery of life always and everywhere, including the lives of unborn babies, giving real help and encouragement to mothers in difficult situations...”

**Pope John Paul II
New York, October 7, 1995**

Permissible Church Activities

- Endorsing/opposing legislation, including ballot referenda
- Homilies/bulletin inserts on moral issues, and on the moral responsibilities of voters
- Providing educational materials on public policy issues, but not candidates, to parishioners
- Arranging for groups to meet with their elected officials to advocate for or against legislation
- Encouraging letter-writing, phone calls and other contacts with candidates and elected officials about issues
- Inviting all candidates for public office to a Church-sponsored public forum, debate, or candidates’ night
- Conducting a nonpartisan voter registration drive on Church property
- Distributing unbiased candidate questionnaires or voting records on a wide variety of issues

Prohibited Church Activities

- Endorsing/opposing candidates for political office
- Homilies/bulletin inserts regarding specific candidates
- Distributing or permitting distribution of partisan campaign literature under Church auspices or on Church property
- Arranging for groups to work for a candidate for public office
- Funding or financial support of any candidate, political action committee, or political party
- Inviting only selected candidates to address your Church-sponsored group, or permitting/hosting political meetings on Church property
- Conducting voter registration that is slanted toward one party
- Rating candidates numerically, or “favorably” or “unfavorably”
- Sharing parish resources, including mailing lists, with political campaigns or parties