

§2300 POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND VOTER EDUCATION

Committed to principled nonpartisan engagement in the political process, the Catholic Church does not and will not engage in partisan politics. The Church does not support or oppose any candidate or party but seeks to focus attention on the moral and human dimensions of issues. We strongly urge all parishioners to become informed on key issues and to register to vote and to vote. In a democracy, loving our neighbor and caring for the least among us means supporting leaders and policies that promote the common good and protect society's most vulnerable members. Helping Catholics recognize and act on this dimension of our faith is an essential task for parish leaders.

Keeping in mind our Catholic social teachings and responsibility to shape morality in the political arena, please avoid the distribution or placement at any parish or diocesan entity of materials that mention specific candidates or political parties in any manner. The Policy of the Indiana Dioceses is that no material should be distributed at the parish or parish schools, and diocesan schools unless it is published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Indiana Catholic Conference, or the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana.

The Catholic Church, its parishes and Church organizations are prohibited by federal law from participating in partisan political activities. This prohibition is absolute. The tax-exempt status of a parish or Church organization may be revoked if there is a violation of the law, and other penalties and taxes may also be imposed on any funds spent on prohibited political activities.

The following policies and procedures are adapted from the "Political Guidelines for Parishes" published by the Indiana Catholic Conference and available online at: <https://www.indianacc.org/icanupdatesnews/political-guidelines-for-parishes-2020>

Further guidance on political activities can be found on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website at <https://www.usccb.org/offices/general-counsel/political-activity-guidelines>

§2301 CLEARLY PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

2301.1. Policy Among the activities that parishes and Church organizations are clearly prohibited from participating in include:

- a) Endorsing a candidate or political party.
- b) Donating parish or organization money or other resources to a candidate or political party.
- c) Exclusively offering the parish's or Church organization's facilities to a candidate or political party.
- d) The pulpit is never to be used by office holders or candidates to advance their views or their political positions, nor as the forum for any individual to support or oppose a candidate for public office.

Procedure

This policy does not prohibit an individual from exercising their individual rights to privately vote or support, as an individual, whom they choose.

§2302 VOTER EDUCATION MATERIALS

2302.1. Policy Only those voter education materials that come from or are approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Indiana Catholic Conference, or the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana may be published by or distributed in parishes, schools, or other entities of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana.

§2303 NON-PARTISAN VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES

2303.1. Policy Nonpartisan voter registration and “Get out the vote” drives are permissible.

Procedures

- a) The event should not demonstrate a preference or bias toward a particular candidate, political party, or voting position.
- b) No election campaign materials or other materials produced by candidates or political parties are to be distributed, and the event should not be conducted in cooperation with any political campaign or party.
- c) The event should be open to everyone and not targeted at individuals known to support a particular candidate.

§2304 ISSUE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

2304.1. Policy Issue advocacy campaigns can be conducted, including educational efforts about issues and legislation and the encouragement of letter writing campaigns and other contacts with government officials, as long as the campaign is conducted in a nonpartisan manner.

2304.2. Policy The position taken on an issue must be consistent with the Church’s position and Catholic Social Teaching.

Procedure

- a) Catholic Social Teaching, as presented within the *Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching* and ongoing Magisterium of the Church, should be the framework from which we address issues in the political arena.
- b) The Bishop is ultimately the sole authority on the application of Catholic Social Teaching within the diocese.

§2305 LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

Comment

Lobbying includes contacting (direct lobbying) or urging the public to contact (grassroots lobbying) members of a legislative body, whether federal, state, or local, for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation or advocating adoption or rejection of legislation.

2305.1. Policy Before any lobbying effort is undertaken, advice of the Executive Director of the Indiana Catholic Conference and the Vicar General must be obtained. This policy is less about limitation than about assuring coordination among the Indiana dioceses and the Indiana Catholic Conference

§2306 DISTRIBUTION OF CAMPAIGN MATERIALS ON THE PROPERTY OF PARISH OR CHURCH ORGANIZATION

2306.1. Policy Parishes and Church organizations should avoid any participation in or authorization of the distribution of campaign literature or biased voter education materials on their property. However, a parish or Church organization is not obligated to actively monitor and prevent campaign leafleting of cars in its parking lot.

Procedure

- a) Political signs should not be placed on property owned or rented for official business by a parish or Church organization.
- b) If the Catholic Entity (parish/pastorate/school/organization) is a polling place, only that location on Diocesan property may allow candidates to place candidate signage proximate to the entry of the poll, only on the day the poll is open for voting, and only as long as there is no restriction limiting political parties or individual candidates. All signage must be removed when the poll is closed.