

A-11 School Participation in Political Campaigning/ Faithful Citizenship

I. Policy

- A. "We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern." - Pope Francis, 9/16/13
- B. As stated in the 1996 National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Statement on Political Responsibility, "The Catholic Community is very diverse. We are democrats, republicans, and independents. We come from differing ideological and political persuasions. But we are called to a common commitment to ensure that political life serves the common good and the human person. Our call to political responsibility is neither a partisan nor a sectarian appeal, but a call to reinvigorate the democratic process as a place for debate about what kind of society we want to be, about what values and priorities should guide our nation." (page 7)
- C. In their 2020 Statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops remind Catholics about the call to participate in political life. "In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation." (no. 13)
- D. During times of political campaign activities, every effort should be made by administrators and faculty to share the Church's teaching on the relationship between Christian faith and political life. The Church's teaching on political responsibility, human life, human rights, and justice and peace, as embodied by the Gospels and the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching should be shared with an emphasis on forming consciences.
- E. Advocating a specific political stance, party affiliation, and/or party agenda must not be exercised by faculty, parents, or students anywhere on the school premises, in the name of the school or during school or school-sponsored activities.
- F. Administrators and teachers are responsible that the atmosphere surrounding any political campaigning activities adheres to the spirit of the policy.

II. Procedures/Guidelines

- A. The principal shall inform all employees, parents, and school groups of this policy.

Allowable Activities:

- B. Inservice opportunities, concerning the topic of religious institutions' responsibilities on political campaign activities, shall be made available to the entire staff. To facilitate this process the latest information from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and its General Counsel should be reviewed.
- C. Awareness of the current events and issues surrounding political campaigns allows a forum

for students to understand their importance in the political process as responsible citizens who think critically and with their Catholic faith as a lens.

- D.** Within the parameters of the above Church documents, schools should encourage involvement/ participation in such activities including, but not limited to, voter registration, debates, issue forums, mock elections, press conferences, etc. Any activities concerning all candidates, political parties or issues, must always be conducted in an atmosphere of full impartiality. Such activities are done to recognize the human dignity of those whose views don't match one's own and treat all with respect.
- E.** The Diocesan curriculum shall include the teaching of citizenship, government, and current affairs in an effort to instill faithful citizenship, encourage an obligation to study the issues, and with the hope that students will become politically involved, with a formed conscience.
- F.** Schools may encourage participation in the voting process such as non-partisan voter registration and "get out the vote" drives. Eligible high school students should be encouraged to register and be educated in the voting process and voter rights.
- G.** Supporting or opposing ballot measures, including referenda, initiatives, constitutional amendments, and similar procedures, is considered "lobbying" activity and not political campaign activity. The Church can take positions on these items. Consult with the Diocese or Ohio Catholic Conference before endorsing. Any materials must be consistent with Catholic teaching on political responsibility, cover a wide range of issues important to voters, and exhibit no bias for or against any candidate or party.
- H.** During a political campaign, if a school administrator chooses to invite candidates or their representatives to present their views, all candidates seeking election to that particular office shall be invited.
- I.** Administrators and teachers, although encouraged to campaign for the candidates of their choice outside of school, must not use the school or classroom as a forum for such campaigning.
- J.** Students should be encouraged to work for the candidates of their choice. Such work must be done outside of school hours and not involve the use of school resources and equipment.

Activities to Avoid

- K.** The posting or distribution of partisan political materials or biased voter education materials (those that support or oppose – or exhibit bias for or against – any candidate or party) on a school's property is strictly prohibited.
- L.** Do not endorse or oppose candidates, political parties, or groups of candidates or take any action that reasonably could be construed as endorsement or opposition within the context of school. Be mindful of one's social media presence.

- M.** School facilities, assets, or staff members are not to be made available for partisan political purposes.
- N.** Do not invite or permit only select candidates to address students. Before inviting candidates. Make sure such events are permissible by the Diocese. If approval is given, all candidates must be invited. No candidate forum should be held within four months of a general election.
- O.** IRS rules against political campaign activity also apply to materials posted on a school website.

P. Links and Supporting Documents

- A.** United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) <https://www.usccb.org/offices/justice-peace-human-development/forming-consciences-faithful-citizenship>
- B.** USCCB Catholic School Principal and Teacher Recommendations <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/ideas-for-catholic-school-principals-and-teachers>
- C.** USCCB Lessons for Elementary <https://www.usccb.org/resources/elementary-lesson-plans-introduction>
- D.** USCCB Lessons for Secondary <https://www.usccb.org/resources/sample-lesson-plans-junior-and-senior-high-school-age-students>
- E.** USCCB Forming Consciences for Faithful <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/parishes-and-schools/upload/Conscience-Formation-bulletin-insert.pdf>
- F.** USCCB Challenges of Forming Consciences <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/The-Challenge-of-Forming-Consciences-for-Faithful-Citizenship-Part-1.pdf> <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/The-Challenge-of-Forming-Consciences-for-Faithful-Citizenship-Part-2.pdf>
- G.** Ohio Catholic Conference Website: <https://www.ohiocathconf.org/>
- H.** Related DOY Policies and Procedures: Community Relations, Adherence to Catholic Teaching, Employee Code of Conduct, Catholic Identity

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X Preschool

X Elementary

X High School