



DEMOCRACY NEEDS VIRTUE, DEMOCRACY NEEDS YOU

Adolf Hitler first came to power by a vote of the people. Even a democracy can be subverted if good and virtuous people remain passive and uninformed. When Pope John Paul II visited the United States in 1995, he reminded Americans how vital it is for democracy to be infused with a spirit of virtue:

“Democracy needs virtue...Democracy stands or falls with the truths and values which it embodies and promotes. 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 criteria regulating all public and social life.”

The 2010 mid-term elections offer an opportunity for Catholic voters to make their voices heard by standing up for what is right and true. Too frequently license is mistaken for liberty to justify everything from abortion and adult sex shops to predatory lending and business practices that harm the environment.

Catholics who know and practice their faith realize that no society can call itself Christian if it fails to respect the sanctity and dignity of all human life from conception until natural death. Fortunately, we live in a democracy, where there are elections and Catholic citizens can promote a culture of life through their voting decisions.

Under federal law tax-exempt organizations, including the Catholic Church, may not endorse, rank or rate political candidates. However, the church may present unbiased information on candidates' views on a variety of issues.

The results of the 2010 elections can have dramatic impact on our nation's well-being. Don't stand on the sidelines. Get involved. Bring the good news of Christ into the ballot box this year.

MCC OFFERS ELECTION GUIDE

Is your parish or parish organization planning any voter education activities for the 2010 election?

Do you know where candidates stand on issues such as pro-life, the death penalty and healthcare reform?

The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) has produced an election guide detailing activities your parish or parish organizations can undertake during the 2010 election. You can find this election guide - *2010 Election: A Guide for Missouri Catholics* - at the MCC's website at www.mocatholic.org.

In this *Messenger* we summarize some of the information provided in the complete guide, including what churches can and can not do during elections, suggestions on talking to candidates through public forums and interviews, and several examples of discussion points you can raise with candidates.



WHAT CHURCHES CAN AND CANNOT DO DURING ELECTIONS

The right to participate in the political process is a fundamental constitutional liberty that extends to churches and other religious organizations no less than to secular institutions and private citizens. Speaking out on issues, even though they may overlap the position of candidates, is entirely proper under the law. Churches and other tax-exempt organizations must however be aware of restrictions of the Internal Revenue Code.

The Internal Revenue Code applies to tax exempt organizations and not to individuals. Individuals are fully free to participate in the political process, to endorse candidates, support candidates and to express their preferences. Individuals who are officials of a tax-exempt organization, however, should clearly separate their individual political action from their official capacity.

WHAT CHURCHES CAN AND CANNOT DO DURING ELECTIONS

Activities permitted - tax exempt organizations:

- Distributing non-biased, non-partisan literature on a wide range of issues;
- Distributing non-biased information encouraging citizens to register and vote;
- Conducting non-biased, non-partisan candidate forums, debates;
- Endorsing/opposing an issue (as opposed to a candidate), e.g. a constitutional amendment;
- Educating candidates and attempting to change their position on an issue.

Examples of permitted activities:

- Holding a candidate forum in the parish hall provided all candidates for the elective office (e.g. State Representative or State Senator) are invited;
- Surveying the positions or views of political candidates and reporting them in parish bulletins, etc. provided that:
 - (1) the questionnaire is not biased in favor of one candidate over another,
 - (2) a wide range of issues are selected, and
 - (3) the results are reported in an accurate or unbiased manner without editorial comment.

All voter education should explicitly disclaim any intent to endorse or oppose any candidate.

Activities prohibited - tax exempt organizations:

- Endorsing or opposing candidates for public elective office;
- Contributing money or in-kind support to a candidate or political party;
- Distributing literature that supports or opposes a certain candidate or political party.

Examples of prohibited activity:

- A homily urging parishioners to vote for or against a particular candidate;
- Labeling candidates in parish bulletins or other materials as anti-abortion, pro-peace, etc.
- Rating candidates with signs, such as + or -, or distributing filled in sample ballots.
- Distributing materials (or authorizing the distribution of materials) that endorse candidates on parish owned property including parking lots.

Examples of prohibited financial or other support:

- Donating money or soliciting financial contributions for a particular candidate;
- Providing free volunteers to a candidate;
- Providing free use of facilities to one candidate but not to other candidates;
- Providing membership lists to one candidate but not to another.

The prohibition against tax-exempt organizations engaging in endorsing and supporting of candidates is an absolute prohibition and, if violated, can result in the loss of tax-exempt status and additional penalties.

2010 ELECTION: A GUIDE FOR MISSOURI CATHOLICS

For the Election Guide
go to www.mocatholic.org.



SPONSORING CANDIDATE FORUMS OR INTERVIEWS

Political ads tend to distort a candidate's position while candidate questionnaires invite overly simplified answers to complex public policy questions. The best way to understand a candidate's position on issues is through conversation, which can occur through public forums or candidate interviews.

Some basic rules should apply to all methods of questioning candidates. They are:

- Be polite and respect the candidate as you would want to be respected. Be fair.
- If an answer to a question is not clear, you should ask the candidate to clarify his/her view. Don't be satisfied with vague answers. Be persistent. Get concrete, clear answers.
- Be non-partisan and non-biased. Pay close attention to the substance of the issues, not personalities and parties.
- Keep the channels of communication open. Listen to the candidate's view as well as advocate your own.

There are many ways you can go about meeting with candidates to explore the major issues of the campaign. Here are a few:

1. Candidate Forum
2. Candidate Interview
3. Attending Candidate Functions

For details on how to conduct candidate forums, interviews, etc. view the MCC website at www.mocatholic.org.

IMPORTANT 2010 ELECTION DATES

July 7	Voter registration deadline for the primary election
July 28	Deadline to apply for absentee ballot for the primary election
August 3	PRIMARY ELECTION
October 6	Voter registration deadline for the general election
October 27	Deadline to apply for absentee ballot for the general election.
November 2	GENERAL ELECTION

RAISING ISSUES WITH CANDIDATES

Unlike a candidate questionnaire, a public forum or interview allows for interaction between the candidate and voters. The MCC Election Guide includes discussion points you can raise with candidates on a variety of public policy issues. Below find an example of the Election Guide's discussion point on the issue of parental choices in education.

Respecting Parental Choices in Education

Catholic Teaching:

"As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to choose a school for them which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental... Public authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 2229

Public Policy Background:

Unlike the neighboring states of Iowa and Illinois, Missouri does not offer financial assistance to parents who choose to send their children to private or parochial schools.

Candidate's Response to Policy Statement:

Tax deductions should be available for educational expenses (for example, school tuition, school supplies) incurred by any K-12 school parents (public, private, etc.).

Support Oppose No Position

All school children - public, private and parochial - should be eligible for publicly funded school bus transportation.

Support Oppose No Position

Other discussion points covered in the MCC Election Guide include abortion, life science research, death penalty, conscience rights, immigration, criminal justice and payday lending. See www.mocatholic.org.

BALLOT TITLE FOR PROPOSITION C

The official ballot language, as prepared by Secretary of State Robin Carnahan, reads as follows:

Shall the Missouri Statutes be amended to:

- Deny the government authority to penalize citizens for refusing to purchase private health insurance or infringe upon the right to offer or accept direct payment for lawful healthcare services?
- Modify laws regarding the liquidation of certain domestic insurance companies?

Joint Statement Concerning Proposition C Addressing the Federal Healthcare Insurance Mandate

On August 3, 2010, Missouri voters will be the first in the nation to express their opinion about a provision in the new federal healthcare reform law that requires individuals to purchase healthcare insurance or pay a penalty. As passed by the Missouri General Assembly, the statute would state in part that: "no law or rule shall compel any person, employer, or health care provider to participate in a health care system." On the ballot the proposal will be known as Proposition C.

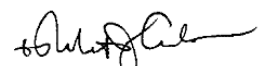
The Catholic Church in the United States has actively provided health care through its various agencies for the rich and poor alike since the early days of this great nation, and has consistently advocated for access to health care for all citizens and immigrants. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), however, opposed the federal healthcare reform bill in the form passed by Congress, because of its failure to honor existing restrictions on federal funding of abortion and failure to assure protection of the conscience rights of healthcare providers and individuals.

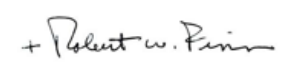
We believe Catholics can differ on whether a federal healthcare insurance mandate is an appropriate means to ensure access to health care for all. We think that the insurance mandate in the new law is flawed, because it fails to respect the right of conscience of individuals to refuse to purchase insurance, if that insurance covers abortion or other unethical medical practices. From that standpoint, we oppose the federal insurance mandate in its current form.


We recognize, however, that Proposition C will not bar federal funding of abortions or address the shortcomings in President Obama's Executive Order. If the constitutionality of the health insurance mandate is upheld in court, Proposition C will have no lasting legal effect, and Missouri citizens will be required to purchase healthcare insurance. For this reason, we are taking a position of neutrality on Proposition C.


In order to address the pro-life and conscience flaws in the federal healthcare law, additional Congressional action is needed. New federal legislation, H.R. 5111, has recently been filed in Washington to prohibit federal support or funding of abortion. We call on all Missouri Catholics to contact their Congressperson and U.S. Senators and urge support for H.R. 5111.

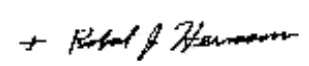
Some Catholics may view Proposition C as the best means to address the pro-life and conscience concerns in the federal healthcare reform law while other Catholics may conclude the only effective remedy is Congressional action to amend the federal law. We encourage Missouri Catholics to prayerfully consider Proposition C, follow a properly formed conscience, and exercise their best prudential judgment as they vote on this issue in August.


Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson
Executive Chairman
Archbishop of St. Louis


Most Reverend Robert W. Finn
Vice Chairman
Bishop of Kansas City - St. Joseph


Most Reverend John R. Gaydos
General Chairman
Bishop of Jefferson City


Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr.
Bishop of Springfield - Cape Girardeau


Most Reverend Robert J. Hermann
Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis

Your light must shine before others.

Matthew 5:16



Earlier this year the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) found itself in a struggle to pass legislation that would stop the spread of adult sex shops that mar so many of Missouri's highways. The porn industry worked behind the scenes, in the darkness, as it were, to kill the measure. The MCC appealed to legislators to bring into the light what was hidden, citing Matthew 5:16: "Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Heavenly Father." In the end, the Missouri General Assembly passed the bill.

Democracy is a very fragile thing. Without the active involvement of citizens of virtue and faith, the darkness of selfish special interests can blot out all efforts to advance the common good. This year the MCC is making a special appeal to Missouri Catholics. We need your help in the halls of the State Capitol and in Washington D.C.

Please become a part of the MCC's Citizens' Network and attend the MCC Annual Assembly, which will take place at the Missouri Capitol in Jefferson City on Saturday, October 2.

Save the date! Missouri Catholic Conference Annual Assembly

October 2, 2010
Missouri State Capitol

The MCC Annual Assembly is designed to provide Catholic citizens with information on public policy issues having a moral dimension, discussion of the responsibility of Catholics as lay leaders and training on how to be an effective advocate.

The Missouri Catholic Bishops will be attending the Annual Assembly and will concelebrate a closing Mass. There will be a variety of workshops by experts in various fields and areas of advocacy including: abortion and healthcare reform, immigration, saving Catholic schools, Catholics and the Tea Party and much more. For the complete list visit www.MOcatholic.org.

Special activities include a youth track featuring a mock legislature and activities for young children. There is no registration cost and lunch will be provided.

In order to plan properly for the Annual Assembly, please register at www.MOcatholic.org or call 1-800-456-1679.

Missouri Catholic Conference Citizens' Network

Acting together Catholic Citizens can advance the common good of the State of Missouri and protect the sanity and dignity of human life. The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) Citizens' Network brings together Catholics from all corners of the state including: the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph, Diocese of Jefferson City and Diocese of Springfield - Cape Girardeau

Services for network members include:

- E-mail weekly *Capitol Update* when General Assembly is in session.
- E-mail alerts on pending legislation.
- E-mail messages on issues you choose: respect for life, education, family life, or social concerns.
- Quick, easy-to-use, pre-drafted messages to send to your elected officials (as-is, or modified to suit your style).
- Monthly *Good News* Newsletter with important MCC alerts and reports.
- Strict protection of your information, which will not be shared with any other organization.

Register online at www.MOcatholic.org.