



MISSOURI CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Messenger

The Missouri Catholic Conference: A half century of dedicated work—and still going strong!

How much do you know about the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC)? The organization has been around for half a century, but many Catholics don't have a cohesive understanding of the purpose of the MCC. We'd like to change that. We're starting this issue of *Messenger*, the quarterly publication of the MCC, with a short history of the last 50 years of the MCC. We hope this will help you become more familiar with the mission of the MCC, and inspire you to become involved with our advocacy efforts by becoming a member of the Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network (MOCAN).

Since its inception, the MCC has worked to promote the common good of all people as the public policy agency for the Catholic Church in Missouri. The conference was formed in 1967 by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Missouri, and through the conference, the state's four dioceses act cooperatively to provide moral leadership and vision to Catholics and others throughout the state on social and political matters of statewide and interdiocesan interest. The MCC does this by participating in all three branches of government and encouraging Catholics throughout the state to be active in the political process.

Over the years, the MCC has experienced both success and failure in its efforts to promote Catholic social teaching in the public square. The MCC's legislative agenda has addressed a variety of different issues, beginning with Catholic education. In 1976, the MCC organized a campaign called "Fairness in Education" to help Catholic schools get access to publicly funded textbooks and transportation. This effort failed, as did a subsequent effort to get parents tax credits for educational expenses. A 2014 campaign to provide tax credits for donations to foundations that offer scholarships to private school students called the "Children's Education Initiative" was also unsuccessful.

However, the MCC has received help from the U.S. Supreme Court in the area of education. In 1997, the court approved of public school teachers providing

remedial education to private school students, and recently ruled that church schools can't be excluded from state grants that provide funding for non-sectarian programs, such as grants for playground resurfacing. The MCC was also assisted by several Catholic state legislators in 2016 with efforts to expand Missouri's A+ scholarship program to private school students, allowing them to access public funds for community college tuition.

In 1973, following the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, the MCC assisted legislators in passing a bill to protect the conscience rights of healthcare workers and faith-based healthcare facilities that do not want to participate in abortions on moral or religious grounds. A decade later, the MCC helped pass and defend state law that defines life as beginning at conception and prohibiting the use of state funds for abortions. These provisions were challenged and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the 1990s, the Alternatives to Abortion program, which provides funding for maternity homes and pregnancy resource centers that assist women facing an unwanted pregnancy, was established with the help of the MCC. The conference also called upon faithful Missouri Catholics and other pro-lifers to a rally on the Capitol grounds in 1999 in support of overriding Governor Mel Carnahan's veto of a partial birth abortion ban. With the support of Catholic advocates, the veto was overridden.

More recently, the MCC has helped with legislation banning abortions in Missouri after 24 weeks, banning telemedicine abortions, and putting a 72 hour waiting period in place for abortions. The MCC also lobbied in 2017 for legislation nullifying a St. Louis ordinance purporting to make the city an "abortion sanctuary." Additional provisions of the 2017 bill require annual inspections of abortion clinics, and complication plans be put in place for facilities performing medication abortions.

Over the years, the conference has also worked to abolish the death penalty in Missouri. This has proven

Timeline

1967 – MCC Formed

1972 – Missouri passes bill allowing private schools to obtain secular textbooks from public schools

1973 – U.S. Supreme Court Issues *Roe v. Wade* decision, legalizing abortion

Missouri passes conscience protections for healthcare workers

Missouri Catholics for Life formed – later becomes Missouri Right to Life

1974 – Missouri Supreme Court strikes down MO law allowing private schools to obtain secular public school textbooks

1988 – Missouri voters reject effort to increase access to Medicaid for low income citizens

1989 – U.S. Supreme Court issues opinion upholding Missouri law prohibiting public funding for abortion and leaves in place "life begins at conception" provision

1991 – Missouri passes Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare bill (allows Missourians to appoint a surrogate for healthcare decisions when incapacitated)

2018 FAITHFUL

to be a difficult legislative undertaking, and victories have been few. However, several death row inmates have had their death sentence commuted after MCC efforts on their behalf. One inmate had direct intervention from the Pope. Governor Mel Carnahan commuted the death sentence of Darrell Mease after an encounter with St. John Paul II during his visit to St. Louis in 1999. St. John Paul II personally requested the governor “have mercy on Mr. Mease,” and Carnahan did the very next day.

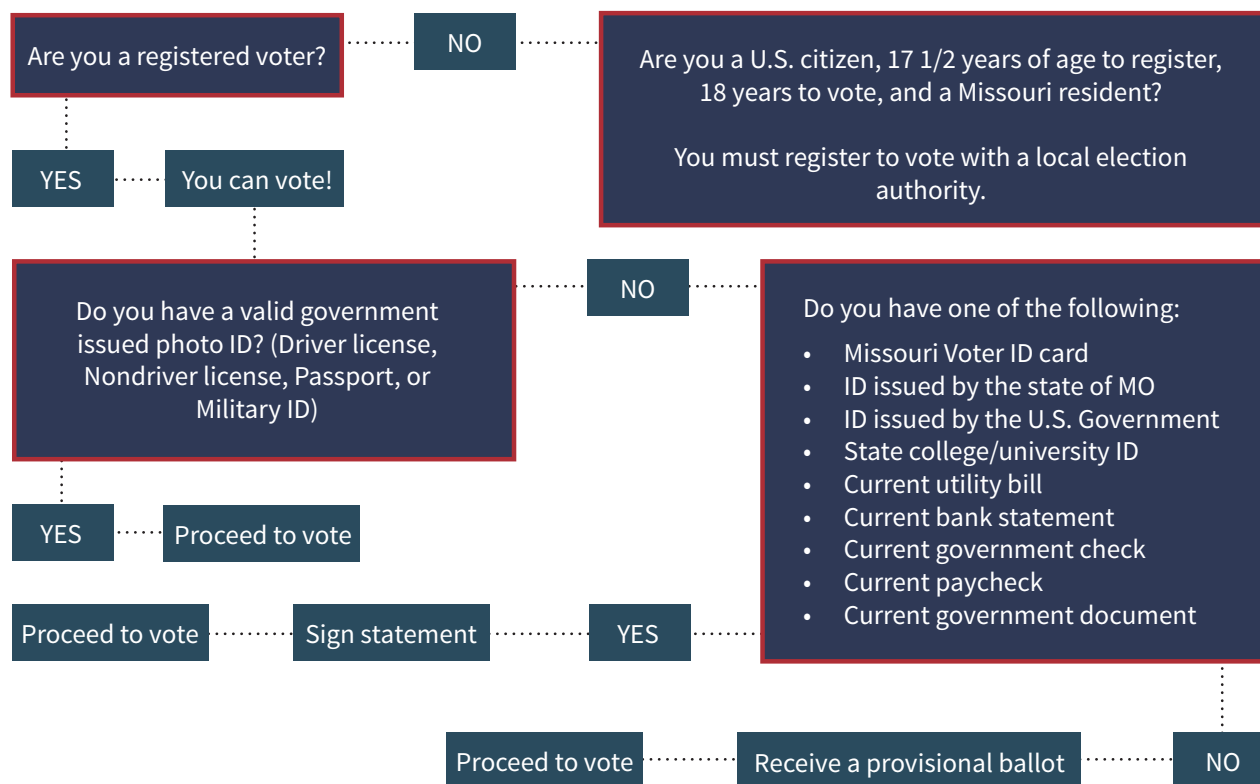
The MCC also had success in 2001 getting legislation passed banning the death penalty for inmates with mental retardation after a decade of effort, and in 2005 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a case arising out of Missouri that juveniles are not developmentally mature enough to receive a death sentence in first degree murder cases.

Protecting the poor and the social programs they rely on is always difficult. The MCC had success in 2001, however, in taking initial steps to regulate payday lenders, though predatory lending still occurs in Missouri to this day. In 2005, the Missouri General Assembly cut Medicaid benefits, and the MCC has worked since that time to reverse those cuts, successfully preserving funding for pregnant women and their unborn children. The MCC did have success in passing legislation that addresses human trafficking and worked to pass a bill raising the age at which juvenile offenders can be charged as adults for non-violent crimes. With the help of the MCC, the Missouri General Assembly also removed restrictions banning felons and drug offenders from obtaining food stamps.

The work continues, and the MCC is always in need of support from faithful Catholics willing to stand up for the unborn and the poor and marginalized. New challenges have emerged as a result of the redefinition of marriage and the emergence of gender ideology. These present legislative challenges and raise concerns for religious liberty and the Church’s charitable work. We hope you will join us on our mission to uphold the common good of all Missourians by joining the Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network (MOCAN).

VOTING IN MISSOURI

It’s important to exercise your right to vote in every election, whether its local or national. Do you know if you’re registered to vote, or what you need to do to become a registered Missouri voter? This flow chart from showit2vote.com, by the office of the Missouri Secretary of State, will help you determine what you need to do before you head to the polls this November. **The general election is Tuesday, November 6, 2018.**



1997 – Missouri effort to pass tax deduction for private and public student educational expenses fails

U.S. Supreme Court issues opinion upholding practice of public school teachers providing remedial education to private school students

1999 – Missouri legislature overrides governor’s veto of partial birth abortion ban

Gov.Carnahan commutes death sentence of Darrell Mease after St. John Paul II makes personal plea at St. Louis basilica

2001 – Missouri passes ban on death penalty for those with mental retardation

2004 – Missouri voters approve constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman

2006 – Missouri citizens approve cloning of human embryos for research

2010 – Congress passes the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

2012 – Missouri passes bill protecting religious groups from contraceptive mandate

CITIZEN ELECTION GUIDE



A Catholic voting guide from the USCCB:

We vote because we are citizens. But we vote conscientiously because we are people of faith. Our consciences are formed through studying Scripture and the teachings of the Church, examination of the facts, and prayerful reflection.

1. **Respect for the dignity of each person** is the core of Catholic social and moral teaching. This is our most basic principle.
2. **We focus on the common good**, not our own personal interests. We ask, how can we make the world a better place? Not, how can I improve my own personal situation?
3. **We have a responsibility**—a true obligation—to form our consciences and participate in the civic life of this nation.

★ **Issues that directly affect human lives**—such as abortion and euthanasia are fundamental and demand serious consideration.

★ Our Constitution heralds **religious liberty** in the First Amendment, yet increasingly people of faith are having to fight to retain this basic right.

★ There is a move in the nation to **redefine marriage**. The marriage of a man and a woman is the foundation of the family and an essential core element of a flourishing society.

★ The **growing disparity between rich and poor** means most of the world's resources are in the hands of a small percentage of its people. The federal budget is a moral document and must prioritize the poorest and most vulnerable among us.

★ The **millions of undocumented persons** living in the United States deserve our compassion. There is an immigration problem, and we need a humane solution to it.

★ War, terror, and **violence** have caused thousands of lost lives. We must work for just solutions to conflict in the Holy Land, throughout the Middle East, and beyond.

Become a member of the Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network (MOCAN) to ensure your voice is heard in the halls of the Missouri State Capitol. As a member of MOCAN, you'll receive our weekly legislative updates, bi-monthly Good News, and a digital copy of Messenger. You'll also be called upon to help us with legislative efforts through Action Alerts, which can be specifically tailored to your interest areas. Visit mocatolic.org or call (800) 456-1679 to sign up for MOCAN today! It's absolutely free. We're looking forward to welcoming you as the newest member of the Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network!



2014 – Missouri passes 72 hour waiting period for abortion

Missouri effort to expand/reform Medicaid program fails

U.S. Supreme Court issues Hobby Lobby opinion permitting closely-held private employers to opt out of contraceptive mandate for moral/religious reasons

2015 – U.S. Supreme Court issues decision legalizing same-sex marriage

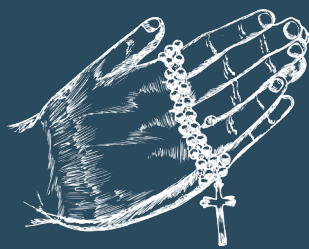
2016 – Missouri passes A+ scholarship program allowing private school students to obtain state funding for community college

2017 – U.S. Supreme Court rules church schools may receive state grants for non-sectarian purposes (e.g. crushed tires for playground surfaces)

Missouri passes sweeping pro-life bill protecting religious organizations from St. Louis abortion sanctuary bill, and requiring inspections of abortion clinics annually

2018 – Missouri passes bill raising the age for juvenile jurisdiction in non-violent criminal cases

Prayer before an election



Lord God, as the election approaches, we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront our city/state/country, and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our community. We ask for eyes that are free from blindness so that we might see each other as brothers and sisters, one and equal in dignity, especially those who are victims of abuse and violence, deceit and poverty. We ask for ears that will hear the cries of children unborn and those abandoned, Men and women oppressed because of race or creed, religion or gender. We ask for minds and hearts that are open to hearing the voice of leaders who will bring us closer to your Kingdom.

We pray for discernment so that we may choose leaders who hear your Word, live your love, and keep in the ways of your truth as they follow in the steps of Jesus and his Apostles and guide us to your Kingdom of justice and peace.

We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ELECTION GUIDE CONTINUED

Do's and Don'ts for Parishes During an Election

Sometimes, the line between what parishes should and shouldn't do during an election can become blurry. This advice from the USCCB will help you navigate what roles a parish should and shouldn't play during election season.

DO:

- Address the moral and human dimensions of public issues.
- Share church teaching on human life, human rights, and justice and peace.
- Apply Catholic values to legislation and public issues.
- Conduct a non-partisan voter registration drive on church property.
- Distribute only unbiased candidate questionnaires covering issues of human life, justice, and peace that have been reviewed and approved by the USCCB, your diocese, or the Missouri Catholic Conference.
- Check with the Missouri Catholic Conference if you have any questions about what is appropriate.

DON'T:

- Endorse or oppose candidates for political office.
- Distribute partisan campaign literature under church auspices.
- Arrange for groups to work for a candidate for public office.
- Invite only selected candidates to address your church-sponsored group.
- Conduct voter registration slanted toward one party.
- Distribute a biased candidate survey.

information provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)



VOTE ON TUESDAY, NOV. 6!

Register to vote online at www.sos.mo.gov/elections/govotemissouri/register



THANK YOU

to the Missouri Knights of Columbus for sponsoring this issue of *Messenger!*