

Messenger

A quarterly publication by the Missouri Catholic Conference

Issue III, October 2020

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

The U.S. Bishops have re-issued their document concerning political activity for Catholics: *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*. The document includes a new introductory note for 2020, which is printed below. To access the entire document, visit the USCCB website: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>

As Catholics, we bring the richness of our faith to the public square. We draw from both faith and reason as we seek to affirm the dignity of the human person and the common good of all. With renewed hope, we, the Catholic Bishops of the United States, are re-issuing Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, our teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics, which provides guidance for all who seek to exercise their rights and duties as citizens.

Everyone living in this country is called to participate in public life and contribute to the common good. In Rejoice and Be Glad [Gaudete et exultate], Pope Francis writes:

Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. . . . You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavor.

The call to holiness, he writes, requires a “firm and passionate” defense of “the innocent unborn.” “Equally sacred,” he further states, are “the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.”

Our approach to contemporary issues is first and foremost rooted in our identity as followers of Christ and as brothers and sisters to all who are made in God’s image. For all Catholics, including those seeking public office, our participation in political parties or other groups to which we may belong should be influenced by our faith, not the other way around.

Our 2015 statement, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, sought to help Catholics form their consciences, apply a consistent moral framework to issues facing the nation and world, and shape their choices in elections in the light of Catholic Social Teaching. In choosing to re-issue this statement, we recognize



that the thrust of the document and the challenges it addresses remain relevant today.

At the same time, some challenges have become even more pronounced. Pope Francis has continued to draw attention to important issues such as migration, xenophobia, racism, abortion, global conflict, and care for creation. In the United States and around the world, many challenges demand our attention.

The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed. At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty and the death penalty.

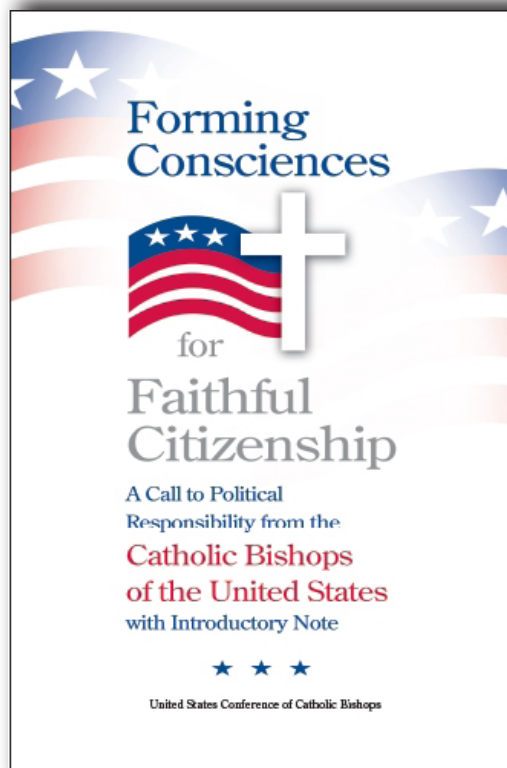
Our efforts to protect the unborn remain as important as ever, for just as the Supreme Court may allow greater latitude for state laws restricting abortion, state legislators have passed statutes not only keeping abortion legal through all nine months of pregnancy but opening the door to infanticide. Additionally,

abortion contaminates many other important issues by being inserted into legislation regarding immigration, care for the poor, and health care reform.

At our border, many arriving families endure separation, inhumane treatment, and lack of due process, while those fleeing persecution and violence face heightened barriers to seeking refuge and asylum. Within our borders, Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and mixed-status and undocumented families face continued fear and anxiety as political solutions fail to materialize. Lawmakers' inability to pass comprehensive immigration reform which acknowledges the family as the basic unit of society has contributed to the deterioration of conditions at the border. As we seek solutions, we must ensure that we receive refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants in light of the teachings of Christ and the Church while assuring the security of our citizens.

The wound of racism continues to fester; the bishops of the United States drew attention to this important topic in the recent pastoral letter, Open Wide Our Hearts. Religious freedom problems continue to intensify abroad and in the United States have moved beyond the federal to state and local levels. As international conflicts proliferate, addressing poverty and building global peace remain pressing concerns, as does the need to assist persons and families in our own country who continue to struggle to make ends meet. We must work to address gun violence, xenophobia, capital punishment, and other issues that affect human life and dignity. It is also essential to affirm the nature of the human person as male and female, to protect the family based on marriage between a man and a woman, and to uphold the rights of children in that regard. Finally, we must urgently find ways to care better for God's creation, especially those most impacted by climate change—the poor—and protect our common home. We must resist the throw-away culture and seek integral development for all.

With these and other serious challenges facing both the nation and the Church, we are called to walk with those who suffer and to work toward justice and healing.



At all levels of society, we are aware of a great need for leadership that models love for righteousness (Wisdom 1:1) as well as the virtues of justice, prudence, courage and temperance. Our commitment as people of faith to imitate Christ's love and compassion should challenge us to serve as models of civil dialogue, especially in a context where discourse is eroding at all levels of society. Where we live, work, and worship, we strive to understand before seeking to be understood, to treat with respect those with whom we disagree, to dismantle stereotypes, and to build productive conversation in place of vitriol.

Catholics from every walk of life can bring their faith and our consistent moral framework to contribute to important work in our communities, nation, and world on an ongoing basis, not just during election season. In this coming year and beyond, we urge leaders and all Catholics to respond in prayer and action to the call to faithful citizenship. In doing so, we live out the call to holiness and work with Christ as he builds his kingdom of love.

Voting Absentee in the COVID World

During the abbreviated 2020 legislative session, the Missouri General Assembly changed Missouri's absentee voting laws in order to allow people who have contracted COVID-19 or are in an at-risk category for COVID-19 to vote via absentee ballot for the November 2020 election. They also changed Missouri voting laws to allow persons to vote via mail-in ballot for the November 2020 election. You can find more information here:

<https://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/>



Absentee Ballots



Mail-in Ballots

Voters may request an absentee ballot from the election authority in the jurisdiction in which they are registered in person, by mail, by fax, or by e-mail. To qualify for an absentee ballot because of COVID-19, voters must indicate on the form requesting the ballot that they have contracted COVID-19 or are at-risk for contracting or transmitting the virus. Those at-risk include persons 65 years of age or older, those living in a long-term care facility, and persons with chronic lung disease, moderate or severe asthma, a serious heart condition, diabetes, chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, liver disease, and persons who are immunocompromised. Election authorities will not require those voting via absentee ballot for reasons related to COVID-19 to have their absentee ballot notarized before submitting it to election authorities. Completed absentee ballots can be submitted to election authorities either in-person or by mail.

Voters may obtain a mail-in ballot either in-person or by mail by requesting one from the election authority of the jurisdiction in which the person is registered. No reason must be given for requesting a mail-in ballot for the November 2020 election, but the request for such a ballot must be received by election authorities by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday October 21, 2020. Unlike absentee ballots, mail-in ballots must be placed in the envelope provided and notarized before being submitted by mail to election authorities in order to be counted. Completed mail-in ballots can only be submitted to election authorities by mail.

Important Dates for Absentee/Mail-in Ballots

October 21, 2020 (Wednesday)

Applications submitted by mail for mail-in and absentee ballots must be received by election authorities by 5:00 p.m. this day.

November 3, 2020 (Tuesday – Election Day 2020)

Completed Mail-in and absentee ballots must be received by election authorities by 7:00 p.m. this day.

Find Out Where the Candidates Stand

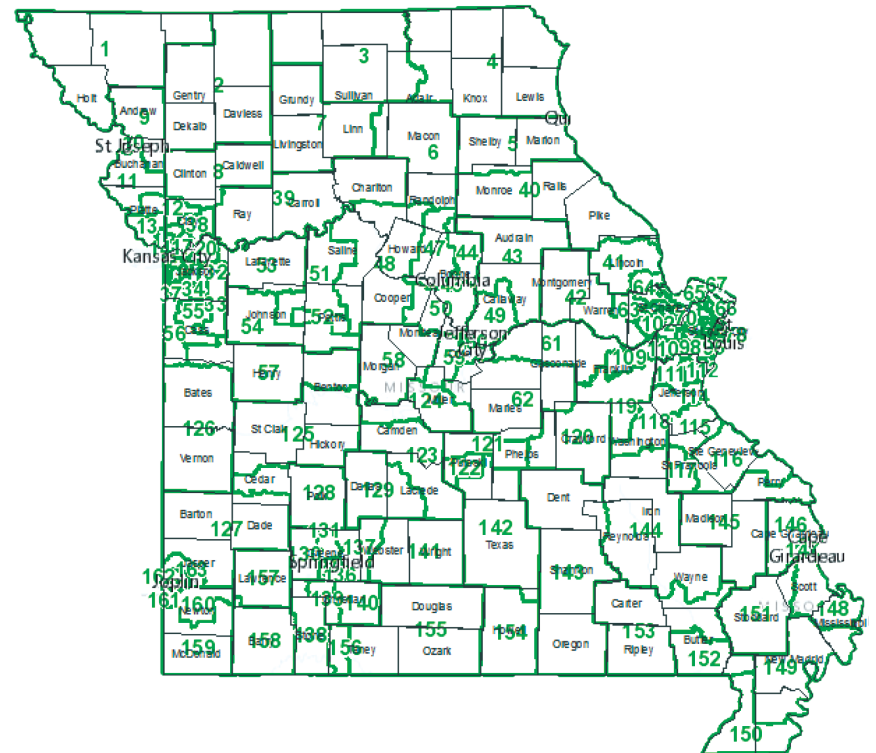
To find out where candidates running for office stand on the issues can seem like a daunting task. But if you have access to the internet, you can find out a lot about a candidate just by reviewing his or her website. If you already know the names of the candidates running in your district, it will be easier for you. To determine who is running for office in your area, you must first know the number of the district in which you live. You can access an interactive map by inputting your home address and reviewing the state and federal districts that correspond to your location on the Missouri Office of Administration website here: <https://ogi.oa.mo.gov/LEGIS/LegislativeDistrict/index.html>

At the federal level, each Missouri citizen is represented by two Senators. Senator Roy Blunt (R) and Senator Josh Hawley (R) represent every Missouri citizen, regardless of their address. Each Missouri citizen is also represented in the U.S. House of Representatives based upon one's address. There are currently eight Congressional districts.

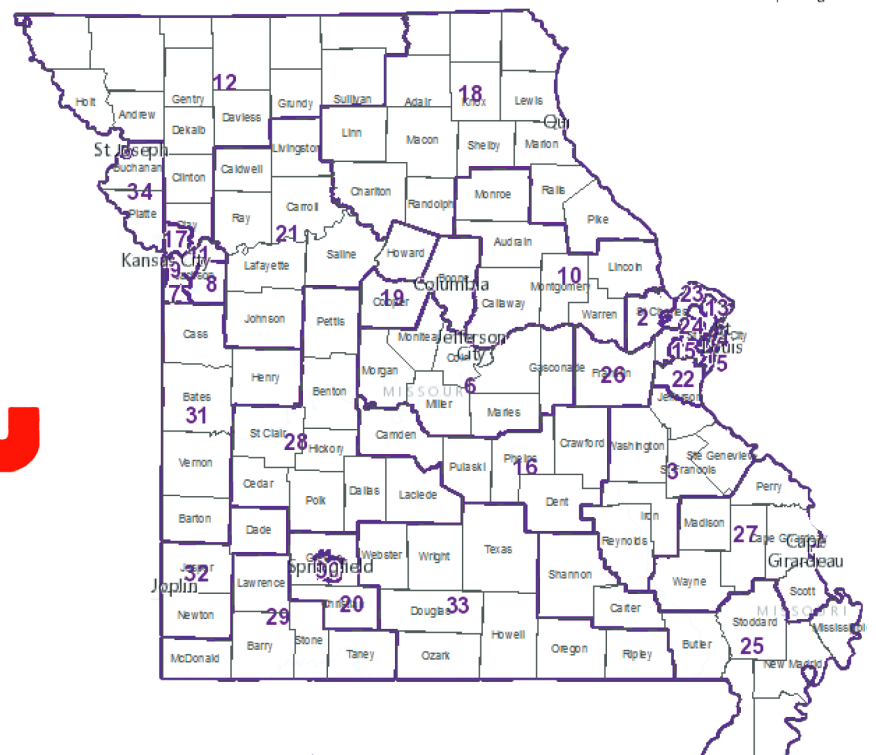
At the state level, each Missouri citizen is represented by both a state senator and a state representative. There are currently 34 state Senate districts and 163 state House districts. First, determine the number of the senate district and house district that corresponds to your address using the interactive map (link above). Then go to the Missouri Secretary of State website to find out the names of the candidates running for that district office. That information is available here: <https://s1.sos.mo.gov/CandidatesOnWeb/>

Once you have found the names of the candidates running for office, you can Google their name to find their website. A good "Google search" might look something like this: "John Smith for Missouri House", or "John Smith for Senate District 8". Most candidates will include information about their position on issues, and some will include the names of groups that endorse them. Many will have videos introducing themselves to voters. Some may even have a Facebook or Twitter page. This will tell you a lot about them and how they would likely vote on issues of concern to you. If you have any trouble finding this information, feel free to contact the MCC. While the MCC does not endorse or oppose candidates, we can help you find your state and federal districts and the candidates running for office in your area if you have trouble finding it yourself. You can call the MCC at (573) 635-7239 or email us at mocatholic@mocatholic.org.

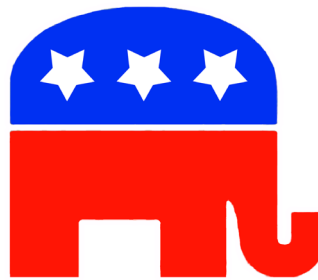
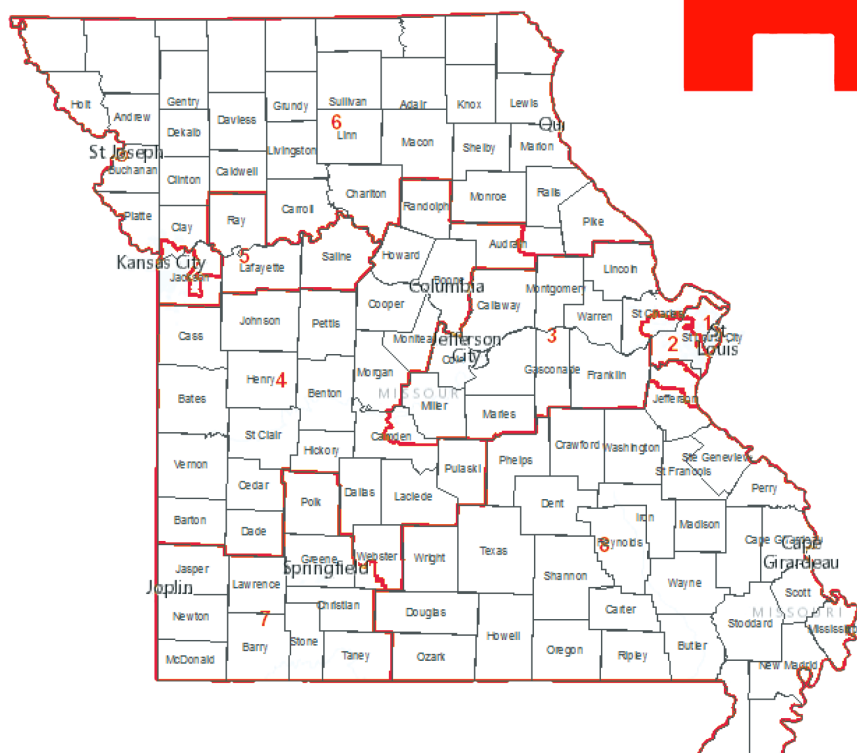
Mo. House Districts



Mo. Senate Districts



U.S. Congressional Districts



Questions to Ask Candidates

The following are questions to ask candidates to determine their position on issues of importance to voters. These questions address legislation that the Missouri Catholic Conference supports as part of the MCC's public policy priorities:



Protecting Human Life:

Do you support/oppose continued state appropriations for the Alternatives to Abortion program, which helps women carry their unborn children to term by assisting them during pregnancy and for one year following birth?



Welcoming the Stranger:

Do you support/oppose providing in-state tuition to undocumented students (Dreamers) who have protected legal status under the federal DACA program?



Advancing Social and Economic Justice:

Do you support/oppose a state low-income housing tax credit to encourage developers to build affordable housing for low-income workers?



Death Penalty Repeal:

Do you support/oppose a trial judge being required to give a life sentence if the jury cannot unanimously decide on the death penalty in a capital murder case?



Religious Liberty:

Do you support/oppose allowing faith-based adoption/foster care providers to operate consistent with their religious convictions by placing children only with opposite-sex couples?



Criminal Justice Reform:

Do you support/oppose parole for offenders over 65 years of age who have served at least 30 years for their crime and have a good prison record?



Education:

Do you support/oppose state tax credits for donations made to scholarship granting organizations that provide tuition assistance for students to attend non-public schools?

Faithful Citizenship Prayer

Merciful Father,
Thank you for inviting each of us to join in your work of building the kingdom of love, justice, and peace. Draw us close to you in prayer as we discern your call in our families and communities. Send us forth to encounter all whom you love: those not yet born, those in poverty, those in need of welcome. Inspire us to respond to the call to faithful citizenship, during election season and beyond. Help us to imitate your charity and compassion and to serve as models of loving dialogue. Teach us to treat others with respect, even when we disagree, and seek to share your love and mercy. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Thanks to Knights of Columbus



The Missouri Catholic Conference wishes to thank the Missouri Knights of Columbus for their financial support of the MCC Messenger.

Many thanks, MO KOC!



Join the Missouri Catholic Advocacy Network! (MOCAN)

Join the 10,000 + Catholic Missourians who make up the team of advocates who help the Catholic voice ring through the halls of the Missouri State Capitol. If you want to stay updated on pro-life legislation — or any of the many other legislative priorities the MCC advocates for — you will not want to miss the opportunity to join MOCAN.

If you're already a member, encourage your family, friends, and fellow parishioners to join! As MOCAN grows, so does the Catholic voice in Missouri's Capitol. Visit mocatholic.org, send us an email at mocatholic@mocatholic.org, or text MOCAN to 50457 to join.