

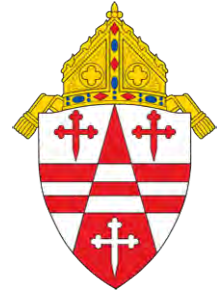
# MANY GIFTS, ONE SPIRIT



## ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE POLICY REFRESHER

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### Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship



Dear Friends,

A new introduction to the U.S. Bishops' document on po-

litical responsibility, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," brings to our attention how each Catholic has the serious responsibility to form his or her conscience, guided by the Holy Spirit, according to the teachings of Christ and the Church. It reminds us that as we pray and consider our vote on issues and candidates, there are certain issues which "require action to pursue justice and promote the common good," while others "involve the clear obligation to oppose intrinsic evils which can never be justified."

As pastoral leaders, we are teachers and guides. Those

roles can be delicate at times, but we can look confidently to our faith and Church teaching, including the teaching documents of the Bishops of Washington and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

This "Policy Refresher" offers important and helpful guidelines for us all, and I ask that you study and abide by it with great care.

Most of all, pray with me that as elections approach, we will be agents of life, love, civility, peace and justice.

God bless you all!

~Archbishop Peter Sartain

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### A Call to Political Responsibility

The Bishops nationally in their 2007 document – Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States – invite individuals and the organizational Church to a ministry that inevitably involves political consequences. This excellent teaching statement, while encouraging political involvement, maintains a distinct role for the Church in the political order, which includes the following:

- Educating its members about the formation of conscience and Catholic moral and social teachings;
- Highlighting the moral dimensions of public policy;
- Participating in debate on matters affecting the common good; and
- Witnessing to the Gospel through the many services and ministries provided by the Catholic community.

The WSCC provides the following guidelines in order

to assist parishes and Catholic organizations to determine activities that are permitted during election campaigns and activities that are prohibited. General guidance by topic can be found at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) website: [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/)

#### Inside this issue:

What we can do	2
What we cannot do	3
Church Leaders	3
Initiatives and Referendums	4
Use of Parish Property	4

## What We Can Do

*“Pastors and parish leaders must be especially careful not to use their position to promote candidates.”*

### Catholic Church and Catholic organization officials can:

1. Make comments and provide moral guidance on political issues.
2. Encourage Catholics to vote and to become involved in political activities.
3. Use parish bulletins and websites and social media to publish and distribute materials on public issues approved by the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).
4. Express the Church's teachings on public issues.
5. Organize voter registration campaigns and “get-out-the-vote” campaigns including information on how to obtain absentee ballots. Provide assistance for handicapped and elderly persons, and for non-English speaking citizens.
6. Organize committees for political education/involvement in issues.
7. Develop a legislative network to advocate for the Church's public policy agenda.
8. Conduct issue and/or balanced candidate forums. Church facilities may be made available for these forums.
9. Distribute questionnaires or voting records of all candidates on a wide range of issues provided the structure and content of the material has an educational purpose and avoids bias toward any candidate.
10. Organize visits to the legislature and letter writing campaigns on legislative issues and initiatives in concert with Catholic Church positions.
11. Allow the use of parish facilities to organizations to discuss issues that are in accord with Catholic Church teaching.

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## What We Cannot Do

Catholic Church and Catholic organization officials cannot:

1. Endorse or oppose candidates or political parties, or actively engage in political campaigns for or against any candidate or party (e.g., through homily, newsletter, flyer, poster, bulletin, e-mail, phone, parish website links, social media, or by providing a parish mailing list).
2. Permit the distribution on Church property, including parking lots, of any printed materials, including political signs, placards, or voter guides that favor or oppose a candidate or promote the agenda of a political party.
3. Permit the distribution of election materials or voter education materials, which relate to issues that have not been published by the diocesan bishop, the Washington State Catholic Conference or the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
4. Use Church bulletins or websites to promote candidates through announcement or advertising.
5. Evaluate candidates in writing or in speech. Types of objectionable evaluations include:
  - a. Labeling a candidate, e.g. "pro life" or "pro choice."
  - b. Comparing or rating candidates, e.g. using a scale of plus (+) or minus (-) or otherwise saying "X is right", "Y is wrong."
  - c. Issuing any "marked" sample ballots that tell people how to vote.
6. Give Church money, in-kind services, or any funds arising from Church related sources to candidates for political office or holders of political office or political parties.
7. Allow the renting or donating of parish or (arch)diocesan facilities, including parish halls, school gyms and auditoriums, to candidates or political parties for partisan activities, such as party conventions, caucuses, candidate promotional events, etc. However, at times other than during an election campaign, facilities may be used to hold public informational forums presented by elected officials. On these occasions, all use and rental arrangements must be in conformity with (arch)diocesan property policies, including provisions for adequate insurance coverage.

No distribution of any election material is permitted unless it is published by the diocesan bishop, the WSCC, or USCCB.

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## Church Leaders

Limitations on partisan political activity apply to organizations and persons acting in an official role as Church leaders (bishops, clergy, pastoral religious leaders, religious, diocesan agency directors, etc.). Pastors and parish leaders must be especially careful not to use their position to promote candidates. Inappropriate promotion would include:

- a. Commenting on candidates from the pulpit, including introductions as members of the parish during an election campaign.
  - b. Allowing your name with title to be used on candidate campaign literature.
  - c. Permitting the use of Church stationery, phones or e-mail to promote candidates.
- Diocesan, parish and Catholic organizational leaders acting as private citizens have a First Amendment right to support or oppose political candidates or parties provided they do not in any way utilize the Church's or Catholic organization's financial resources, facilities or personnel. Leaders must clearly and unambiguously indicate that the actions or statements they make are their own and not those of the Church or of the Catholic organization.

*"Bishops together with priests and deacons, assisted by religious and lay leaders of the Church, are to teach fundamental moral principles that help Catholics form their consciences correctly, to provide guidance on the moral dimensions of public decisions, and to encourage the faithful to carry out their responsibilities in political life."*

*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, 2007 Statement by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

# ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE POLICY REFRESHER

## Initiatives And Referendums

The Washington State Catholic Conference reviews all proposed initiatives and referendums. After appropriate consultation, WSCC supports, opposes or takes no position on each measure.

Given the current popularity of the initiative process in Washington State, individuals and groups may want to gather signatures on Church property or at Church activities. The gathering of signatures is not encouraged or appropriate

unless specifically authorized by the local Bishop. When neither the WSCC nor the (arch)diocese has taken a public position on a specific initiative or referendum, granting the use of Church facilities to groups either supporting or opposing

the issue should not be allowed. The local Bishop may have specific instructions for the (arch)diocese. The WSCC should be consulted for background information on the issue.

## Use of Parish Property

Many individuals and organizations seek support from Catholic parishes and individual Catholics for their issues. Some may want to distribute information to parishioners or place flyers on cars in parish parking lots. Washington State Supreme Court rulings hold that free speech rights do not give individuals or organizations the right to distribute information on church property against the desires of the parish.

Pastors, parish administrators, and pastoral life directors

have the right to prohibit the following activities on parish property:

- Distributing information to parishioners
- Gathering signatures for petitions
- Placing leaflets on car windshields in parish parking lots
- Placing political signs or placards on Church property

If permission is granted for any of the above activities, it must be subject to the restrictions on political activity

described in the section titled “WHAT WE CANNOT DO.”

The WSCC is available to address any questions regarding political activity.

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The Catholic Church is committed to the value of being non-partisan. In addition, the

Church and its many organizations maintain a tax-exempt status under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Tax Code which dictates the political activities that a 501(c)(3) organization can and cannot do.

These guidelines were developed in consultation with the General Counsel of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and attorneys for the dioceses in Washington State. The Washington State Catholic Conference has approved them.



The Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) represents the Catholic Bishops of Washington State: Archbishop J. Peter Sartain of the Archdiocese of Seattle, Bishop Blase J. Cupich of the Diocese of Spokane, Bishop Joseph J. Tyson, of the Diocese of Yakima and Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S., auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle.