

ELECTION 2008

Ohio's Election is Tuesday November 4, 2008. The deadline for voter registration is Monday, October 6, 2008.

On September 17, 2008, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio reviewed the five pending statewide ballot issues. They have issued a Ballot Issue Reflection Guide offering issue summaries, pros and cons, reflection questions and position statements.

Voters are encouraged to study, pray and reflect upon these statewide issues, and to keep in mind Catholic social teachings on care for people, care for the earth, and care for justice. The Catholic Conference of Ohio believes each of these issues involves prudential decisions. Conscientious voters may arrive at differing positions on these issues.

For your consideration, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio have chosen to take the following public positions: Neutrality on Issues 1 (Ballot Deadlines), 2 ("Clean Ohio" Bonds), and 3 (Water Rights), YES on 5 (Payday Lending Reform), and NO on 6 (Private Casino).

For further materials on Election 2008 visit the Catholic Conference of Ohio's website: www.ohiocathconf.org.



The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) has developed materials for educational use based upon their statement Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call To Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States.

Please link to the USCCB's website, Faithful Citizenship, (www.faithfulcitizenship.org) for these excellent resources.

OHIO LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

The Ohio General Assembly is in recess until after the November 2008 elections. After the elections, Ohio legislators will return to a "lame duck" session. All legislation introduced over the past two years that has not passed by December 31, 2008 will have to be re-introduced starting January 1, 2009. This will be the start of the 128th General Assembly. In a "lame duck" session all kinds of issues can receive attention. Heightened citizen advocacy is necessary to help assure that responsible legislation is passed.

The following is an update on previous legislative actions.

Abortion Restrictions.

HB 314, allowing the opportunity to view ultrasound results prior to an abortion, was passed and signed into law. It went into effect on June 20, 2008.

HB 280, requiring the posting of a "non coercion" sign in all abortion clinics, passed the House and action is expected in the Senate during the November "lame duck" session.

State-Sponsored Scholarship Programs

Three state-sponsored scholarship programs benefit students attending Catholic schools in Ohio: The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, the EdChoice Scholarship Program, and the Autism Scholarship Program.

The EdChoice Scholarship Program will help over 5,500 students attending Catholic schools during 2008/2009.

The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, the oldest of the three programs, is expected to benefit over 5,600 students who live within the boundaries of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District during 2008/2009.

Eleven Catholic schools plan to participate in the Autism Scholarship Program in 2008/2009.

Ohio Immigration Issues

Immigration reform has stalled at the federal level. There remains great divisiveness both within the legislature and throughout the community. Catholic immigrant outreach workers report an increase in prejudice and incidents of violence towards many Ohio immigrant workers. There is much fear throughout the Hispanic communities. The heightened enforcement practices have resulted in abusive profiling, insensitive treatment of family members, and increased reports of workplace injustice.

Death Penalty Execution Alert

Richard Cooley is scheduled for execution on October 14, 2008 for the deaths of University of Akron students Dawn McCreery and Wendy Offredo. The Catholic Conference of Ohio wrote a letter to Governor Strickland asking for a commutation to life without parole.

Gregory Bryant-Bey is scheduled for execution November 19, 2008 for the Toledo deaths of Dale Pinkelman and Peter Mihas.

For further information on these legislative updates link to the Catholic Conference of Ohio's website: www.ohiocathconf.org.



VISION FOR U.S. HEALTH CARE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Catholic health ministry looks forward to a health care system that truly promotes the nation's well-being and respects the dignity of every person.

We believe that health care in the U.S. should be:

Available and accessible to everyone, paying special attention to the poor and vulnerable.

Ensure that each person has a core health benefit package covering services across the life span of care.

Deliver the same level and quality of care to everyone without limits or variations based on age; race; ethnicity; financial means; or health, immigration or employment status.

Health & prevention oriented, with the goal of enhancing the health status of communities.

Make preventive care a core part of health benefits in every community and develop provider and patient incentives that reward prevention.

Improve health literacy and education to help patients play a greater role in maintaining their own health and wellness.

Sufficiently and fairly financed.

Share the responsibility of financing among all stakeholders.

Care for those who cannot help themselves by having all stakeholders, including government, employers, individuals, charitable organizations and health care providers, collectively assume responsibility.

Transparent and consensus-driven in allocation of resources, and organized for cost-effective care and administration.

Manage cost growth to promote affordability and sustainability; efficiently use facilities, equipment and services; minimize administrative expenses.

Spend resources on care that is most medically beneficial.

Patient centered and designed to address health needs at all stages of life, from conception to natural death.

Ensure that services are coordinated and integrated all along the continuum of care — the system should be truly accountable for health outcomes.

Design palliative and end-of-life care to ensure the best and most compassionate treatment for persons with serious, complex diseases and those in the final stages of life.

Safe, effective and designed to deliver the greatest possible quality.

Standardize and expand the use of information technology to improve clinical coordination, reduce medical errors and improve the patient experience.

Use evidence-based medicine to optimize outcomes and quality; prioritize patient safety by minimizing the systemic causes of errors.



**ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS FOCUS
IS AVAILABLE AT:**

WWW.OHIOCATHCONF.ORG



FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP QUESTIONS FOR VOTING 2008

MAKING MORAL CHOICES IN VOTING

FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP:
A CALL TO POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES
PARAGRAPHS 34-37

34. Catholics often face difficult choices about how to vote. This is why it is so important to vote according to a well-formed conscience that perceives the proper relationship among moral goods. A Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who takes a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, such as abortion or racism, if the voter's intent is to support that position. In such cases a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in grave evil. At the same time, a voter should not use a candidate's opposition to an intrinsic evil to justify indifference or inattentiveness to other important moral issues involving human life and dignity.

35. There may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position may decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons. Voting in this way would be permissible only for truly grave moral reasons, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil.

36. When all candidates hold a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, the conscientious voter faces a dilemma. The voter may decide to take the extraordinary step of not voting for any candidate or, after careful deliberation, may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods.

37. In making these decisions, it is essential for Catholics to be guided by a well-formed conscience that recognizes that all issues do not carry the same moral weight and that the moral obligation to oppose intrinsically evil acts has a special claim on our consciences and our actions. These decisions should take into account a candidate's commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given issue. In the end, this is a decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio encourages voters to carefully study and prayerfully consider their voting choices. The United States Catholic Bishops' 2007 Statement, "*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*," calls for a renewed politics that focuses on moral principles, the defense of life, the needs of the weak, and the pursuit of the common good.

The Catholic Church does not tell voters how to vote. The responsibility to make political choices rests with each person and his or her properly formed conscience.

Catholic voters are called to properly form their consciences in preparation for voting and for the continued advocacy for just laws and policies required after voting. This process requires constant prayer, understanding of Church teaching, and discernment that goes beyond campaign rhetoric and partisan politics. It should also focus on a candidate's consistency with moral principles, sincerity, integrity and the ability to effect the policies that he or she promotes.



FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP QUESTIONS FOR VOTING 2008

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON CHOOSING CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

1. What is the candidate's commitment to protect all human life, from conception to natural death?
2. What is the candidate's commitment to other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism and other unjust discrimination, the use of the death penalty, resorting to unjust war, the use of torture, war crimes, the failure to respond to those who are suffering from hunger or a lack of health care, or an unjust immigration policy?
3. How does the candidate measure up in both words and actions with the totality of Catholic Social Teaching?
4. What would be morally grave reasons to support and/or oppose a candidate? (Please refer to the U.S. Bishops document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, paragraphs 34 through 37).
5. What is my assessment of the candidate's personal integrity, governing philosophy, performance and ability to influence a given issue?
6. Has the candidate demonstrated sufficient competency to hold such an elected position?



It must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility towards the common good.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, No. 4.

GENERAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR VOTERS

1. Have I properly formed my conscience based upon what is true, just, and right and allowed it to inform my political choices?
2. How does my faith call me to move beyond individual self-interest to promotion of the common good?
3. How do my spirituality, understanding of Catholic Social Teachings, and acts of charity and justice shape my involvement in public life?
4. What views do I hold that are challenged by my faith and Catholic Social Teachings?
5. How will my vote help protect and/or enhance the life, dignity and rights of the human person, prioritize the poor, and advance the common good?

GENERAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS REGARDING BALLOT ISSUES

1. Will passage of an issue promote the value and dignity of the human person, enhance the health and well-being of Ohioans, and advance the common good of persons in the state, especially the poor and vulnerable?
2. Is the issue needed and well conceived?
3. Does the issue reflect a change that should be addressed in the state constitution (as opposed to an issue that ought to be addressed through the legislative process)?
4. Do the benefits of an issue outweigh the potential financial costs and/or potential legal challenges?
5. Does the issue enhance family life and improve neighborhoods and communities throughout the state?
6. Does the issue promote economic justice by fairly addressing the needs of employers, workers and consumers?



Forming Consciences For Faithful Citizenship Questions Regarding Ohio Ballot Issues

General Questions

1. Will passage of an issue promote the value and dignity of the human person, enhance the health and well-being of Ohioans, and advance the common good of persons in the state, especially the poor and vulnerable?
2. Is the issue needed and well conceived?
3. Does the issue reflect a change that should be addressed in the state constitution (as opposed to an issue that ought to be addressed through the legislative process)?
4. Do the benefits of an issue outweigh the potential financial costs and/or potential legal challenges?
5. Does the issue enhance family life and improve neighborhoods and communities throughout the state?
6. Does the issue promote economic justice by fairly addressing the needs of employers, workers and consumers?

Issue 1 -- Ballot Deadlines

Issue 1 requires that a citizen-initiated statewide ballot issue be considered at the next general election if petitions are filed 125 days before the election.

Will Issue 1 help or hinder a citizen's ability to reasonably pursue statewide ballot initiatives?

The Catholic Conference of Ohio has taken a neutral position on Issue 1.

Issue 2 -- "Clean Ohio" Bonds

Issue 2 authorizes the State to issue bonds of up to \$400 million for continuation of the *Clean Ohio Program for Environmental Revitalization and Conservation*.

Is Issue 2 a reasonable, responsible and effective way to help care for the earth and promote helpful economic development?

The Catholic Conference of Ohio has taken a neutral position on Issue 2.

Issue 3 -- Water Rights

Issue 3 will make explicit in Ohio's Constitution that private property owners have a right to the reasonable use of the ground water underlying their land or bordering a lake or other watercourse, although this right will remain subordinate to the public welfare.

Does Issue 3 reasonably and effectively balance private property water rights with the needs of the common good?

The Catholic Conference of Ohio has taken a neutral position on Issue 3.

Issue 4 -- Sick Leave (removed from the ballot)

Issue 5-- Payday Lending Reform

Issue 5 asks whether Section 3 of HB 545, the payday lending reform act, should remain part of Ohio law. Section 3 eliminated the existing payday lending provisions in favor of a more regulated and limited small loan program.

Voting YES will keep the reforms enacted by HB 545. Among other things, these reforms lower the maximum interest rate from 391% APR (annual percentage rate) to 28 % APR.

On balance, do you consider the pre-HB 545 payday lending practices to be fair, helpful and needed, or do you believe them to be exploitive, harmful and unnecessary?

The Catholic Conference of Ohio supports a YES vote on Issue 5. The Conference encourages the retention of payday lending reforms.

Issue 6 -- Private Casino

Issue 6 will amend Ohio's Constitution to authorize one privately owned casino in the State of Ohio in Southwest Ohio.

Is Issue 6 well conceived and in the long-term best interest of the people of Ohio?

The Catholic Conference of Ohio opposes Issue 6. The Conference believes it is not in the best interest of the people of Ohio.



Forming Consciences For Faithful Citizenship Catholic Conference of Ohio & Ballot Issues

There are five possible statewide issues on the November 2008 ballot. Voters are encouraged to study, pray and reflect upon these issues, and to keep in mind Catholic social teachings on care for people, care for the earth, and care for justice. The Catholic Conference of Ohio believes each of these issues involves prudential decisions. Conscientious voters may arrive at differing positions on these issues.

For your consideration, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio have chosen to take the following public positions: **NEUTRALITY** on issues **1** (Ballot Deadlines), **2** ("Clean Ohio" Bonds), and **3** (Water Rights), **YES** on **5** (Payday Lending Reform), and **NO** on **6** (Private Casino).

Vote YES on Issue 5 Payday Lending Reform

Issue 5 asks whether Section 3 of HB 545, the payday lending reform act, should remain part of Ohio law. Section 3 eliminated the existing payday lending provisions in favor of a more regulated and limited small loan program.

Voting YES will keep the reforms enacted by HB 545. Among other things, these reforms lower the maximum interest rate from 391% APR (annual percentage rate) to 28 % APR.

The teachings of the Catholic faith provide many warnings about usury and exploitation of people. Lending practices that, intentionally or unintentionally, take unfair advantage of one's desperate circumstances are unjust.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio believe that HB 545 responsibly protects the working poor and all Ohio consumers from the spiraling indebtedness caused by payday lending.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio encourages a YES vote to maintain the significant and necessary reforms regarding payday lending.



Vote NO on Issue 6 Private Casino.

Issue 6 will amend Ohio's Constitution to authorize one privately owned casino in southwest Ohio.

Games and schemes of chance are not in themselves contrary to justice. The Church recognizes, however, that a variety of social ills can become associated with any form of gambling, especially casino gambling.

Previous Catholic Conference of Ohio statements on casino gambling raised concerns over the seductiveness of high stakes gambling and the harm such gambling has had on families, especially those with lower incomes.

Some catholic institutions still operate bingo. While there are a variety of social ills that can be associated with charitable bingo, in bingo, the gambling stakes are much lower, and 100% of the proceeds are used for charitable purposes.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio are opposed to Issue 6. The Catholic Conference of Ohio believes casino gambling is not in the best moral, social and economic interests of the citizens of our state. Furthermore, the Conference believes that the Ohio constitution should not be amended primarily to benefit a single private entity.

The Conference encourages a NO vote on Issue 6.