

VOTING QUESTIONS 2006

The Catholic Conference of Ohio encourages voters to carefully study and prayerfully consider the candidates and issues that are on the November 7, 2006 ballot. The Conference has provided the following questions for consideration. We encourage Catholic voters to reflect upon our Catholic Social Teaching Principles calling for discerning political participation, the defense of human life and promotion of the common good.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR VOTERS

1. How does my Catholic faith inform my politics?
2. How does my faith call me to move beyond individual self-interest to promotion of the common good?
3. How does 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?

“The Catholic community is a diverse community of faith, not an interest group. Our church does not offer contributions or endorsements. Instead we raise a series of questions, seeking to help lift up the moral and human dimensions of the choices facing voters and candidates.”

*Faithful Citizenship:
A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility, 2003*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON CHOOSING CANDIDATES

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 those things that make life truly human – such as poverty reduction, faith and family, education and work, housing and health care, child protection, economic justice, freedom and peace?
3. How does the candidate measure up in both words and actions with the totality of Catholic Social Teaching?
4. What is my assessment of the candidate’s personal integrity and governing philosophy?
5. Has the candidate demonstrated sufficient competency to hold such an elected position?

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?

BALLOT ISSUES SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

There are four statewide ballot issues this November. The Catholic Bishops of Ohio believe these issues allow for prudential judgments where persons of good will and sound faith may respectfully differ on the value and need for each Issue. **As a Conference we have taken an opposition stance to Issue 3, the Learn and Earn Gambling proposal, while remaining neutral on all the other ballot issues.**

MINIMUM WAGE

In Catholic Social Teaching, the promotion of a “just wage” and a “living wage” is integral to our understanding of human work. Wages must be adequate for workers to provide for themselves and their families in dignity.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been a long time supporter of legislation increasing the Federal minimum wage. The Catholic Conference of Ohio has supported previous legislative efforts in Ohio to increase the state minimum wage and continue to support an increase in principle. However Issue 2 on this year’s ballot raises two challenging questions:

1. **Are there adequate safeguards in Issue 2 regarding the confidentiality of work-related records?**
2. **Are there sufficient reasons for increasing the state minimum wage in the state constitution as opposed to legislative action?**

SMOKING

In Catholic Social Teaching, we show respect for our own life and dignity when we adopt lifestyles that enhance our health and well-being. Promoting public health is another way of enhancing the common good.

Smoking and second hand smoke carries known health risks. At the same time, there is no specific Church teaching prohibiting smoking.

1. **Does either of the smoking proposals (Issue 4 or Issue 5) reflect appropriate, enforceable, and fair restrictions that will enhance personal and public health?**

GAMBLING

In Catholic Social Teaching, games of chance are not in themselves inherently wrong. However, a variety of social ills can be associated with any form of gambling such as addiction, familial irresponsibility, substance abuse, and/or organized crime.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio has taken an opposition stance on Issue 3, the *Learn and Earn* gambling proposal. Concerns are raised over the highly addictive nature of casino and slot machine gambling, the potential harm to persons and families, and the inappropriateness of a constitutionally protected monopoly for casino and racetrack owners.

1. **Will Issue 3 be in the best moral, social and economic interest of the people of Ohio?**
2. **Is Issue 3 well conceived, well drafted and appropriate for inclusion in the state Constitution?**
3. **Is Issue 3 needed, and will it help persons, businesses, social institutions and families?**
4. **Will passage of Issue 3 entice significant numbers of individuals to consistently gamble away more than they can afford to lose?**
5. **As a result of Issue 3, will communities and educational facilities develop an unhealthy dependency on tax revenues from for-profit casino and slot machine gambling?**
6. **As a result of Issue 3, will communities be able to properly monitor and regulate casino and slot machine gambling so as to minimize criminal and immoral behavior?**
7. **Will the widespread availability of casino and slot machine gambling result in an increase of social ills such as addictive gambling, substance abuse, and crime?**
8. **Will the specific operational provisions authorized by State Issue 3 assure fair competition, appropriate state oversight, and meaningful citizen participation?**
9. **Do the potential benefits of Issue 3 outweigh the potential burdens?**

Please refer to the Catholic Conference of Ohio’s October 3, 2006 Statement in Opposition to State Issue 3. This Statement can be found at: www.ohiocathconf.org.

STATE LAW NOW REQUIRES ALL VOTERS TO SHOW IDENTIFICATION AT THE POLLING PLACE. ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF I.D. ARE: OHIO DRIVER’S LICENSE OR OHIO PHOTO I.D. (EVEN IF IT SHOWS A PREVIOUS ADDRESS), BANK STATEMENTS, UTILITY BILLS, PAYCHECKS AND ANY GOVERNMENT-ISSUED DOCUMENT SHOWING YOUR CURRENT ADDRESS.

OHIO BALLOT ISSUES NOVEMBER 2006

Issue 2

Minimum Wage Constitutional Amendment

- ◆ Raises the Ohio minimum wage to \$6.85 an hour by 2007 for most workers with annual cost-of-living adjustments thereafter.
- ◆ Requires public and private employers to make available employee wage and certain personnel information to an employee or person acting on behalf of an employee.
- ◆ Imposes new record-keeping requirements on all employers.



Pro Arguments (<http://www.letjusticeroll.org>)

Is beneficial to the economy. According to a recent study (Policy Matters Ohio), raising the minimum wage would benefit 719,000 Ohio workers. Increasing the wage to \$6.85 would bring many workers from a small family out of poverty, have substantial benefits for workers already earning more than \$5.15, and ensure that inflation does not quickly erode the value of low-wage workers paychecks.

Restoring Ohio's minimum wage to a level comparable to what it was in the past would send a message that Ohio values its working families.

Constitutional amendment is needed since the legislature has failed to enact significant reform.



Con Arguments (<http://www.otppp.com/index.htm>)

Would bring Ohio one step closer to eliminating personal privacy by requiring nearly all public and private employers to make available employee wage and certain personnel information to an employee or person acting on behalf of an employee—at no charge; and it would impose new and potentially costly record-keeping requirements on all employers.

Is harmful to the economy. Raising the minimum wage will hurt small business owners and lead to fewer jobs.

Amendment is poorly drafted. Minimum wage change should be enacted through legislation and not a constitutional amendment

Issue 3

Casino Gambling: Learn and Earn Constitutional Amendment

- ◆ Permits up to 31,500 slot machines at seven horse racing tracks and two Cleveland non-track locations. It will also permit expanded gaming in the four Cuyahoga County locations if approved by the county's voters.
- ◆ Distributes the revenues as follows: 55% to the slot and casino owners and operators; 30% to the Board of Regents for college scholarships and administration of the program. The remaining revenues are to be divided among local governments, racetracks for purse money and gambling addiction services.



Pro Arguments

(<http://www.ohiolearnandearn.com>)

Ohio has lost billions of dollars in gaming revenue to our neighboring states.

Learn and Earn will deposit nearly one billion dollars a year directly into college grants and scholarship accounts of all Ohio students who have successfully completed the core curriculum established by the Ohio Board of Education.

Many persons responsibly enjoy gambling and view it as an appropriate form of entertainment.



Con Arguments (<http://www.ohcouncilchs.org>)

Casinos and slot machines harm families and seduce gamblers, especially those with lower incomes. Slot machines are the "crack cocaine" of gambling, referring to the addictive nature of the machines on gamblers and the quickness by which bettors can lose large amounts of money. Studies have indicated that the problems of gambling addiction double when placed within 50 miles of the gambler.

The specifics of the amendment are deceptive. This proposal will provide only 30% of the profits to create undergraduate tuition scholarships to the top 5% of Ohio's graduating high school seniors. This will provide financial help for less than 6500 students out of 1,800,000 public school students. The amendment does not guarantee any specific amount of tuition by either the slot machine owners or the state after the 12-year investment period.

The gambling owners will reap extensive monetary gain and have a constitutionally protected monopoly in the State.

Incidents of crime (substance abuse, prostitution, assault and battery, etc.) often increase around Casinos.

Issue 4

Smoke Less Constitutional Amendment

- ◆ The Smoke Less Ohio proposal would place in the Constitution a ban on smoking in 90% of enclosed public places, but make limited exemptions for places that serve mostly adults. Places where smoking would be allowed include: bars, bingo halls, businesses (minors prohibited), bowling alleys and restaurants (must have a separate enclosed room).
- ◆ The amendment would supersede any existing local smoking ban.



Pro Arguments

(<http://www.smokelessohio.com>)

Smoke Less is a *common sense* approach that balances protection for public health with protection against overly intrusive government. Ohioans should be free to make personal choices, whether about their own health or how to run their businesses.

There should not be criminal sanctions against courteous and responsible smokers.

There should be state uniformity regarding smoking restrictions.



Con Arguments

(<http://www.smokefreeohio.org>)

Secondhand smoke causes cancer, heart disease, and lung diseases. Everyone has the right to breathe clean indoor air, free of secondhand smoke, in public places and workplaces.

Would overturn laws in the 21 Ohio cities that have strong smoke-free public places laws even if voters in those cities approved the laws through a vote.

Could not be changed except by another Constitutional Amendment. (The Smoke Free law is an initiated statute which is a state law that can be changed by state lawmakers in the unlikely event that adjustments need to be made after it passes.)

PLEASE NOTE: ISSUE 1 DID NOT SECURE SUFFICIENT VALID SIGNATURES AND WAS REMOVED FROM BALLOT CONSIDERATION.

ALSO: SHOULD BOTH ISSUE 4 AND ISSUE 5 PASS, THE SMOKE LESS PROPOSAL (ISSUE 4) WOULD BECOME LAW SINCE IT IS A CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.

Issue 5

Smoke Free Workplace Act Initiated Statute

- ◆ The Smoke Free proposal enacts legislation (not a Constitutional Amendment) that will prohibit smoking in public places and businesses throughout Ohio. Exceptions include: private residences, lodging facilities, family owned and operated businesses not open to the public, nursing homes (must have designed enclosed smoking area), retail tobacco stores, outdoor patios with proper containment provisions, and private not-for-profit clubs.
- ◆ Civil fines could be charged by the Ohio Department of Health. Fines range from \$100-\$2,500 against a proprietor and \$100 against an individual for each violation.
- ◆ Requires the Ohio Department of Health to establish a *smoke free indoor air fund* and public education program.



Pro Arguments

(<http://www.smokefreeohio.org>)

Smoke Free does not ban smoking. It just asks smokers to step outside for a few minutes to protect everyone's right to breathe clean indoor air.

Second hand smoke causes cancer, heart disease, and lung diseases. Everyone has the right to breathe clean indoor air, free of secondhand smoke, in public places and workplaces.

The Smoke Less Amendment would overturn laws in the 21 Ohio cities that have smoke free bans.



Con Arguments

(<http://www.smokelessohio.com>)

Smoke Free is an absolute, sweeping approach that bans smoking in all enclosed public spaces. Smoke Less is the common sense approach, which seeks to balance protection for public health with protection against overly intrusive government.

There should not be criminal sanctions against courteous and responsible smokers.



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CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO OPPOSITION STATEMENT ON ISSUE 3 GAMBLING AMENDMENT

OCTOBER 3, 2006

On November 7, 2006 voters will be asked to amend the Constitution of the State to authorize the establishment of casino and slot machine gambling. This amendment, State Issue 3, permits up to 31,500 slot machines at seven horse racing tracks and two Cleveland non-track locations. It will also permit, if approved by the county's voters, expanded gaming in the two racetrack and two non-racetrack locations in Cuyahoga County. 55% of the revenues raised from this amendment are to be distributed to the slot and casino owners and operators, 30% to the Board of Regents for college scholarships and administration of the program. The remaining revenues are to be divided among local governments, racetracks for purse money and gambling addiction services.

Many persons have asked how the Catholic Church views gambling in general, and State Issue 3 in particular. In response to those who have asked, we offer the following:

Games and schemes of chance are not in themselves inherently wrong. The Church recognizes, however, that a variety of social ills can become associated with any form of gambling. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* "they become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement" (2413).

Because of the many concerns associated with gambling, we encourage you to study this proposed constitutional amendment to determine whether such gambling facilities are in the best interest of the citizens of this state. Such determination should include both moral and economic considerations. Here are some questions that you might ask yourself as you think about how to vote on this constitutional amendment:

Is Issue 3 needed, and will it help persons, businesses, social institutions and families?

Is Issue 3 well conceived, well drafted and appropriate for inclusion in the state Constitution?

Will passage of Issue 3 entice significant numbers of individuals to consistently gamble away more than they can afford to lose?

As a result of Issue 3, will communities and educational facilities develop an unhealthy dependency on tax revenues from for-profit casino and slot machine gambling?

As a result of Issue 3, will communities be able to properly monitor and regulate casino and slot machine gambling so as to minimize criminal and immoral behavior?

Will the widespread availability of casino and slot machine gambling result in an increase of social ills such as addictive gambling, substance abuse, and crime?

Will the specific operational provisions authorized by State Issue 3 assure fair competition, appropriate state oversight, and meaningful citizen participation?

Do the potential benefits of Issue 3 outweigh the potential burdens?

As Catholic Bishops, we conclude that passage of Issue 3 would not be in the best moral, social and economic interest of the citizens of our state. Experience indicates that a variety of social ills are associated with casino and slot machine gambling. These include a tendency to promote addictive gambling, familial irresponsibility, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and organized crime. Slot machines have been called the "crack cocaine" of gambling, referring to the addictive nature of the machines on gamblers and the quickness by which bettors can lose large amounts of money. Studies have indicated that the problems of gambling addiction double when casinos are placed within 50 miles of the gambler.

We also question whether this proposal is well conceived and well drafted. Recent studies have questioned the economic projections and the reliability of funds within the proposed scholarship program. In addition, we do not feel that it is in the best interest of Ohioans to grant a *constitutionally protected monopoly* to a limited number of casino and racetrack owners. Voters should carefully consider proposals that seek to amend the Constitution with very detailed provisions.

In stating our opposition to casino gambling initiatives, we are often questioned about our Church's involvement in charitable bingo. It is a fact that many of our institutions rely upon this form of fundraising. We would prefer, and in fact have encouraged, our institutions to raise needed funds through alternate forms of fundraising because there are a variety of social ills that can also become associated with charitable bingo.

At the same time, however, charitable bingo benefits the community and involves community members in ways distinct from casino gambling. Bingo games in Ohio use 100% of the net proceeds for charitable purposes. These charities are churches, schools, fraternal groups, youth athletic programs, volunteer fire departments, senior citizen clubs, neighborhood organizations, and various service programs. Thousands of volunteers donate their time to staff such games. Communities have been generally supportive of this form of "lower stakes" charitable fundraising.

Casino and slot machine gambling is something different. We believe that passage of Issue 3 would not be in the long-term best interest of our state.



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING SELECTIVE QUOTES ON FAITH & POLITICS

"The life and dignity of the human person is fundamental. Without the right to life, no other rights are possible. So we will not compromise on life, but we will not stop there. Jesus came so that we might "have life and have it more abundantly." We believe every human person has a fundamental right to life. All issues are clearly not of equal moral worth— life comes first. But as the Doctrinal Note makes clear, those things which make life truly human – faith and family, education and work, housing and health care – demand our attention and action as well..."

USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians, June 2004

"Bringing a respect for human dignity to practical politics can be a daunting task. There is such a wide spectrum of issues involving the protection of human life and the promotion of human dignity. Good people frequently disagree on which problems to address, which policies to adopt and how best to apply them. But for citizens and elected officials alike, the basic principle is simple: *We must begin with a commitment never to intentionally kill, or collude in the killing, of any innocent human life, no matter how broken, unformed, disabled or desperate that life may seem...*"

"Opposition to abortion and euthanasia does not excuse indifference to those who suffer from poverty, violence and injustice. Any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care. Therefore, Catholics should eagerly involve themselves as advocates for the weak and marginalized in all these areas. Catholic public officials are obliged to address each of these issues as they seek to build consistent policies which promote respect for the human person at all stages of life. *But being 'right' in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life.* Indeed, the failure to protect and defend life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the 'rightness' of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community."

*Living the Gospel of Life:
A Challenge to American Catholics, 1998 USCCB Statement.*

"It is important to note that Cardinal Ratzinger [Pope Benedict XVI] makes a clear distinction between public officials and voters, explaining that a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil only if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate's permissive stand on abortion. However, when a Catholic does not share a candidate's stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted if there are proportionate reasons."

USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians, June 2004

"We urge our fellow citizens to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest. As bishops, we seek to form the consciences of our people. We do not wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates. We hope that voters will examine the position of candidates on the full range of issues, as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which to address issues in the political arena."

Faithful Citizenship: U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2003

"Our faith has an integral unity that calls Catholics to defend human life and human dignity whenever they are threatened. A priority for the poor, the protection of family life, the pursuit of justice and the promotion of peace are fundamental priorities of the Catholic moral tradition, which cannot be ignored or neglected. We encourage and will continue to work with those in both parties who seek to act on these essential principles in defense of the poor and vulnerable."

Responsibilities of Catholics in Public Life USCCB, March 10, 2006.

SUGGESTED READINGS FAITH & POLITICS

Doctrinal Note on some Questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Public Life. Vatican, 2002

Faithful Citizenship Statement, USCCB (September 2003)

Statement on Responsibilities of Catholics in Political Life (March 10, 2006).

Task Force Report on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians, (November 17, 2004)

Catholics in Political Life (June 18, 2004)

Interim Reflections Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians (June 15, 2004)

Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics - 1998 USCCB Statement.

Deus Caritas Est: God is Love-Encyclical Letter Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas, 2005

**DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE
CATHOLIC CONFERENCE WEBSITE:
WWW.OHIOCATHCONF.ORG**