



Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops **2022 Voter Guide**

This year, Florida voters have the privilege and freedom to participate in voting for candidates who have come forward to serve their communities. Tuesday, August 23, 2022 is Primary Election Day, and Tuesday, November 8, 2022 is General Election Day. The following offices will be decided:

- **Federal: One of two Florida U.S. Senate seats and all 28 U.S. Representatives in Florida's Congressional Delegation.**
- **State: Governor of Florida, all 40 State Senators and all 120 State Representatives. Please note that some Florida legislative candidates have been elected with no opposition.**

To view a list of candidates running in each race and district, visit the candidate listing on the website of the [Florida Division of Elections \(bit.ly/3PgDTC0\)](https://bit.ly/3PgDTC0). Click on each candidate's name to find contact information.



Before voting, Catholics are called to consider a wide range of issues important to the common good, weighing each according to its moral importance. It is beneficial to research the ballot ahead of time and gather the facts for every proposal and race. This guide offers information about Catholic teaching and questions regarding current issues to assist voters in evaluating candidate positions or political party platforms. Consider using these tools for prayer and reflection before casting your ballot.

“We are called to bring together our principles and our political choice our values and our votes to help build a civilization of truth and love.”

Forming Consciences For Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility with New Introductory Letter, USCCB, 2019.

Human Life and Dignity

Every human being has God-given value, from conception to natural death. The dignity and sanctity of all human life must be recognized and protected, beginning with the unborn child in the womb. The threat of abortion remains a preeminent issue, given the sheer number of lives taken. Other crucial priorities include addressing serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism and gun violence, human trafficking, physician-assisted suicide, and the death penalty. As Christians, we all have a duty to respect life and work toward a society free from violence and marginalization of any kind.

- *Does the candidate support enacting further legislative limits on abortion and the abortion industry, as well as laws that assist women experiencing difficult pregnancies?*
- *Does the candidate support protecting life from conception to natural death, such as ending the use of the death penalty (especially by protecting defendants with serious mental illness), preventing human trafficking, and opposing efforts to legalize physician-assisted suicide?*

Immigration

Catholics are sensitive to the reasons why families flee their home country and migrate to the United States, such as war, dire poverty, unjust governments, lawlessness, gang violence and authoritarian regimes that suppress religious freedom. A lack of food, water, health care, or other necessities also play a role. Comprehensive reform of our broken immigration system is needed, which would offer a path to citizenship or “legal status”, treat workers fairly, and promote expedited family reunification while protecting border integrity and addressing root causes of migration.

- *Will the candidate leave immigration policy to Congress where the courts have indicated responsibility resides so as to avoid an unconstitutional patchwork of state policies?*

Justice System Reform

In recent years, the justice system has learned it is more effective to be “smart on crime” rather than simply relying on harsh punishments. A Catholic approach to criminal justice begins with calling for all to be free from crime and violence, while pursuing just solutions that encourage rehabilitation over retribution.

- *Does the candidate support rehabilitation programs for those who were incarcerated to help them become productive members of society upon release?*
- *Where does the candidate stand on sentencing guidelines that reflect an individual’s threat to society rather than mandatory minimum sentencing?*

Education

Parents are the first and primary educators of their children and have the fundamental right to choose the educational environment that best suits their children. Florida has a robust system of school choice. Elected officials have a duty to preserve and expand this system and to provide public, charter, private, and home school educational options that promote the common good, right reason, personal responsibility, and genuine human flourishing. It is important for lawmakers to support policies that protect these values in the realm of both private and public education, where so many Catholic young people are educated.

- *Does the candidate support parental rights of children attending public schools, including the preservation and expansion of Florida’s strong school choice system?*
- *Does the candidate support education policies that promote objective truth about biological sex, the dignity of the human person, the traditional family structure and human virtue?*

Labor and Economy

The Gospels reveal that Jesus saw the dignity and value of every person and called His followers to care for those on the margins. His example of sacrificial love is one we should embody by serving the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Catholics are called to consider how candidates will support policies that improve economic conditions and address structural causes of poverty.

- *Does the candidate promote policies that foster economic participation and job creation to provide decent working conditions and just wages?*
- *Does the candidate support policies to allow increased access to basic needs, such as affordable housing, education, and health care?*

Religious Liberty

The U.S. Constitution guarantees each individual the right to freely exercise his or her religion. To some in the political arena, this sacred principle is no longer paramount. While the Constitution prohibits the government from establishing a state religion, neither does it permit the government to establish a purely secular public square by excluding all religions. Elected officials are urged to re-invigorate religious liberty for all by promoting the active civil engagement of all religious peoples and protecting the participation of religious institutions in government programs.

- *While recognizing the human dignity of all, does the candidate support the right of religious individuals and institutions to operate and/or participate in government programs while serving according to their deeply held beliefs regarding life, marriage, family, sexual orientation, and so-called gender identity?*

Children and Families

Strong communities are formed when stable and loving families are supported and encouraged. The Catholic Church teaches that marriage – the love of a man and woman in a life-long commitment – is a vocation for the purpose of rearing children and spousal unity. Public officials can support marriages and families through their positions and policies.

- *Does the candidate support policies that acknowledge the reality of biological sex and promote a wholistic understanding of the human person?*
- *Does the candidate believe in protecting marriage as an institution that brings together one man and one woman in faithful union?*

Health Care

The Church considers healing a central ministry of the Church and has long supported the right to quality, affordable, and life-affirming care.

- *Does the candidate support adequate access to health care for low- and moderate-income individuals and families?*
- *Does the candidate support the right of health care workers to exercise their conscience in regard to their deeply held beliefs?*

Care for Creation

Florida's beautiful beaches, iconic Everglades, and delicate ecosystems reflect the beauty of God's creation and represent a vital economic resource. Environmental degradation, pollution, sea-level rise, and overdevelopment threaten the well-being of all Floridians, especially the more vulnerable among us.

- *How will the candidate address environmental issues, particularly their impact on the poor?*
- *Does the candidate support policies that will protect the state's natural resources and promote human flourishing?*

“Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern.”

Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, September 16, 2013

Faith and Politics

In the days and weeks leading up to the election, Florida Catholics have a responsibility to consider how they can best serve their communities through election choices and contribute to a climate of civility in the face of divisiveness and disagreement. During the election, and perhaps just as importantly in their daily lives, Catholics are reminded to allow their faith to guide their politics. The principles of faith that govern daily life should also guide political viewpoints, and when necessary, “transform the political party to which we belong.”¹

Prior to casting their ballots, Catholics have the opportunity to ask:

- **What does God want me to do?**
- **How will my voting choice help to promote the common good and protect human life and dignity?**
- **How can I speak up about the issues that matter in a respectful way?**

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, it is the lifelong responsibility for Catholics “to do good and oppose evil,” including in election choices.² To distinguish between right and wrong, people of faith turn to their conscience: a tool that relies on the “judgement of reason” and Scripture to offer guidance for decision-making.³ Each Catholic is called to develop a “well-formed” conscience, internalizing their faith and the Word of God so they can apply it to real-life situations daily.⁴

Conscience Formation

In the context of the upcoming election and the conscience formation process, the Catholic Church reminds people of faith that they are not alone. While the Church does not endorse candidates or instruct parishioners how to vote, it has particular responsibilities: sharing the moral truth about issues and encouraging believers to develop prudence. Prudence is a virtue that, if cultivated, assists individuals in “[discerning] our true good in every circumstance and [choosing] the right means of achieving it.”⁵ Developing a well-formed conscience is not a one-time exercise, but requires ongoing prayer and commitment. For more information, see [*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*](#), by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Florida Catholic Advocacy Network

- The Florida Catholic Advocacy Network (FLCAN) is a statewide, online community established by the bishops of Florida that exists to connect, educate, and mobilize Catholics across Florida’s seven dioceses on public policy issues pertaining to human life, dignity, and the common good.
- Subscribers receive via email: action alerts on key bills at both the state and federal levels that allow for quick and easy messaging to elected officials; reports, summaries, and educational materials that identify legislative proposals affecting issues important to our faith; and calls to prayer for the people of our state and nation, and for our elected leaders.
- Those who are interested can sign-up by visiting <https://flaccb.org/join-flcan>. The Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops does not share subscriber information with any other individuals, groups, or organizations.

1, 2, 4. *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, USCCB, 2019: [bit.ly/2CY57yl](https://www.usccb.org/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship). 3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), Second Edition, no. 1778: [bit.ly/2PGKxVW](https://www.usccb.org/catechism). 5. CCC, Second Edition, no. 1806: [bit.ly/2PGKxVW](https://www.usccb.org/catechism).