

FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP

Goals for Political Life: Challenges for Citizens, Candidates, and Public Officials

U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS

OUR FOCUS

As Catholics, we are led to raise questions for political life other than those that concentrate on individual, material well-being. Our focus is not on party affiliation, ideology, economics, or even competence and capacity to perform duties, as important as such issues are. Rather, we focus on what protects or threatens the dignity of every human life.

OUR CHALLENGE

Catholic teaching challenges voters and candidates, citizens and elected officials, to consider the moral and ethical dimensions of public policy issues. In light of ethical principles, we bishops offer the following policy goals that we hope will guide Catholics as they form their consciences and reflect on the moral dimensions of their public choices. Not all issues are equal; these ten goals address matters of different moral weight and urgency. Some involve intrinsically evil acts, which can never be approved. Others involve affirmative obligations to seek the common good. These and similar goals can help voters and candidates act on ethical principles rather than particular interests and partisan allegiances. We hope Catholics will ask candidates how they intend to help our nation pursue these important goals:

PUBLIC POLICY GOALS

PROTECT THE WEAKEST

Address the **PREEMINENT REQUIREMENT** to protect the weakest in our midst—innocent unborn children—by restricting and bringing to an end the destruction of unborn children through **ABORTION** and providing women in crisis pregnancies the supports they need to make a decision for life.

Keep our nation from turning to violence to address fundamental problems—a million abortions each year to deal with unwanted pregnancies, **EUTHANASIA** and assisted suicide to deal with the burdens of illness and disability, the **DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN EMBRYOS** in the name of research, the use of the death penalty to combat crime, and imprudent resort to **WAR** to address international disputes.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY LIFE

Protect the fundamental understanding of **MARRIAGE** as the life-long and faithful union of one man and one woman and as the central institution of society; promote the complementarity of the sexes and reject **FALSE "GENDER" IDEOLOGIES**; and provide better support for **FAMILY LIFE** morally, socially, and economically, so that our nation helps parents raise their children with **RESPECT FOR LIFE**, sound **MORAL VALUES**, and an ethic of stewardship and responsibility.

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IMMIGRATION REFORM

Achieve comprehensive **IMMIGRATION REFORM** that offers a path to citizenship, treats **IMMIGRANT WORKERS** fairly, prevents the **SEPARATION OF FAMILIES**, maintains the **INTEGRITY OF OUR BORDERS**, respects the **RULE OF LAW**, and addresses the factors that compel people to leave their own countries.

ASSISTANCE FOR THE VULNERABLE

Help families and children overcome **POVERTY**: ensuring access to and choice in **EDUCATION**, as well as decent work at fair, **LIVING WAGES** and adequate **ASSISTANCE FOR THE VULNERABLE** in our nation, while also helping to overcome widespread **HUNGER** and poverty around the world, especially in the areas of development assistance, debt relief, and international trade.

PROVIDE HEALTH CARE

Provide **HEALTH CARE** while **RESPECTING HUMAN LIFE**, human **DIGNITY**, and **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM** in our health care system.

OPPOSE UNJUST DISCRIMINATION

Continue to oppose policies that reflect **PREJUDICE**, hostility toward immigrants, **RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY**, and other forms of **UNJUST DISCRIMINATION**.

PURSUE THE COMMON GOOD

Encourage families, community groups, economic structures, and government to work together to overcome poverty, pursue the **COMMON GOOD**, and **CARE FOR CREATION**, with full respect for individuals and groups and their right to address social needs in accord with their basic moral and **RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS**.

END PERSECUTION

Establish and comply with **MORAL LIMITS ON THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE**—examining for what purposes it may be used, under what authority, and at what human cost—with a special view to seeking a responsible and effective response for ending the **PERSECUTION** of Christians and other religious minorities in the **MIDDLE EAST** and other parts of the world.

JOIN WITH OTHERS...

... around the world to **PURSUE PEACE**, protect human rights and **RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**, and advance **ECONOMIC JUSTICE** and care for creation.

The above text constitutes Part III of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. For more information please visit: www.usccb.org.

"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."

- Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States