



Policies of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Policy # 230.3

Political Activities by Parish Staffs and Organizations

Approved By: Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, DD

Approved: April 1, 1996

Effective: April 1, 1996

Revised By: Most Reverend Robert W. Finn, DD, October 17, 2008

The diocese does not endorse candidates or political parties, however we strongly advocate and encourage voters to become informed about issues and candidates. The decisions of individual citizens should be grounded on sound moral principles consonant with the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church and factual information about the positions and principles of candidates.

To ensure that the Church does not become entangled in politics and for the Diocese to continue to qualify for tax exempt status, it must not engage in prohibited political campaign activity. Violation of these prohibitions can have serious tax consequences, including the loss of deductibility of contribution to the parish as well as loss of tax exempt status for the diocese.

Unfortunately, the line between activities that are permitted and activities that are prohibited is often unclear. The restrictions are based on detailed guidelines issued by the General Counsel of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Guidelines are published by the General Counsel at www.usccb.org.

One specific activity that merits particular attention is the preparation and distribution of candidate questionnaire responses, candidate voting records, and similar "voter education" materials. Due to the technicality of the regulations, do not get involved in this unless the material comes from the USCCB, the Missouri Catholic Conference, or the Chancery.

- Candidate materials should never be allowed in the church or parish buildings.
- Parish lists should never be used by candidates, or their representatives, for voter solicitation.
- Pastors may not actively promote the distribution of partisan materials on cars, but they are not responsible for controlling it.
- Priests and deacons are encouraged to preach on the issues in accord with the authentic Magisterium, but must not preach in favor of specific candidates or political parties.
- Persons participating in public liturgical ministries should be discouraged from wearing partisan buttons, etc., etc.
- Candidates or their representatives may not address the public on Church property.

- Candidate forums may not take place in the Church. Candidate forums that take place on other parish property should be approved in advance, in writing, by the Chancery. Please contact either the Vicar General or the Chancellor.
- Voter registration may not take place on parish property without the approval of the Chancery. Approval for party-neutral registration should be sought, in writing, through either the Vicar General or the Chancellor.
- Catholic organizations should not make statements, either oral or written, supporting or opposing any candidate for elective office, any slate of candidates, a political party or political action committee. This would include statements made in a homily, a parish bulletin, or distribution of filled-in sample ballots.
- In addition, Catholic organizations should avoid statements that indirectly support or oppose a particular candidate, e.g., labeling a candidate as pro-life or anti-family, using plus (+) or minus (-) or similar signs that indicate candidates' agreement, or lack thereof, with Church teaching on issues.
- An individual candidate for office should not be invited or permitted to speak at Church events. Candidate forums may, however, be sponsored by a parish provided all candidates running for the same office are invited to participate.
- Be aware that the rules for properly accepting paid political advertising in a parish bulletin are complex and need special attention.