



Catholic Bishops of Florida 2010 Election Year Statement
Vote in the Tuesday, November 2 General Election
Early voting in Florida begins October 18

The increased interest and involvement surrounding the federal and state elections this year are a clear sign of a strong democracy. Whether it is running for office, working for a political party or casting a vote, we encourage the faithful to play an active role in public life. However, in doing so one must seek what is truly authentic and promote what is both right and good. As followers and witnesses to Christ, our actions in the public square must reflect the values of our faith and demonstrate a fundamental belief in the dignity of every person and the sacredness of all human life.

We are obligated as Christian brothers and sisters to consult our consciences, shaped by sacred scripture and the teachings of the Church, before voting and supporting or opposing issues. We must weigh how others will be impacted, especially the most vulnerable and weak members of our society, and examine potential benefits or harm to the common good. We recognize with certainty that some issues involve acts that are always wrong, such as direct attacks on human life. Still others allow for different positions on the best way to address them. In these cases, a well-formed conscience will help us to determine the most appropriate course of action.

The Church seeks to equip the faithful with the tools necessary to properly form their consciences in order to address political and social questions. Catholic Social Teaching is a valuable resource as we evaluate candidates and their platforms and determine whether our own judgments are consistent with Gospel values. The right to life, protection of marriage and family, care for the poor and the disabled, treatment of immigrants, parental choice in education and religious freedom are among the issues which must be considered when voting for candidates.

To assist with choices in the voting booth, we invite you to view the Florida Catholic Conference Candidate Questionnaire Project, which asks candidates where they stand on important issues that will come before them as elected officials. Beyond the election, we should undertake efforts to regularly communicate our positions to lawmakers. Florida Catholics can stay informed and take action on public policies of concern by joining the Florida Catholic Conference advocacy network. Those who are already members can encourage others to join this effort to ensure that the voice of the Catholic faithful is heard by our lawmakers in Washington, DC and our state capital. Individuals can locate candidates' positions on issues and join the advocacy network by visiting www.flacathconf.org.

As Election Day nears, we ask the Holy Spirit for guidance as we seek wisdom through quiet contemplation and prayer.

Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski
Archdiocese of Miami

Fr. Richard Walsh
Diocese of Orlando

Bishop Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Bishop Victor Galeone
Diocese of St. Augustine

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ
Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Auxiliary Bishop John G. Noonan
Archdiocese of Miami