



A Voter's Guide for November 4

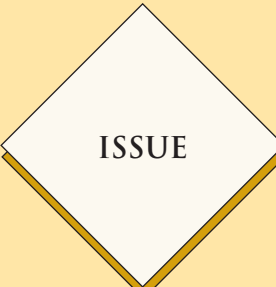


Inform your conscience on the key issues

Editor's note: In order to assist our readers as they prepare to cast their votes for President, Vice-President, and federal and state legislators on Tuesday, November 4, *Fairfield County Catholic* presents the following Voter's Guide, a study of several issues of great interest and importance to Catholics and others, as quoted directly from the published platforms of each major party, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the compendium of official Church teachings.

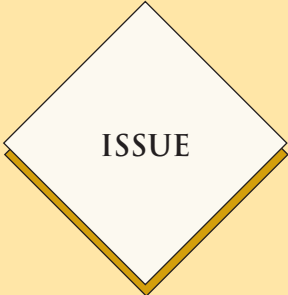



A Duty and A Right

As a 501(c)(3) organization, the Catholic Church is prohibited by the Internal Revenue Code from participating in any political campaign or endorsing a particular candidate or party. The Church is permitted, however, to instruct the faithful at any time about the Church's teaching on moral and social issues, and identify such issues as important current political topics. The Church has both a duty and a right to call attention to the moral and religious dimensions of public issues.

It is essential that every Catholic nurture a well-informed conscience, mindful of how their actions – especially on Election Day – correspond with the teachings of the faith. For further reference and study, consult the paragraph numbers listed from the *Catechism*, which is available in bookstores or online at www.usccb.org.

 <p>ISSUE</p>	<p>Democratic Party Platform</p>	<p><i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i></p>	<p>Republican Party Platform</p>
 <p>ABORTION</p>	<p>“The Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports <i>Roe v. Wade</i> and a woman’s right to choose a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay, and we oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right. . . .</p> <p>“We oppose the current Administration’s consistent attempts to undermine a woman’s ability to make her own life choices and obtain reproductive health care, including birth control.</p> <p>“We will end health insurance discrimination against contraception and provide compassionate care to rape victims.</p> <p>“We will never put ideology above women’s health.”</p>	<p>“Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. . . . Since the first century, the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. . . .</p> <p>“Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life. . . . The Church does not thereby intend to restrict the scope of mercy. Rather, she makes clear the gravity of the crime committed, the irreparable harm done to the innocent who is put to death, as well as to the parents and the whole of society.</p> <p>“The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation.”</p> <p>(Paragraphs 2270-2273)</p>	<p>“Faithful to the first guarantee of the Declaration of Independence, we assert the inherent dignity and sanctity of all human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to unborn children.</p> <p>“We oppose using public revenues to promote or perform abortion and will not fund organizations which advocate it. We support the appointment of judges who respect traditional family values and the sanctity and dignity of innocent human life. . . .</p> <p>“Because the family is our basic unit of society, we fully support parental rights to consent to medical treatment for their children including mental health treatment, drug treatment, alcohol treatment, and treatment involving pregnancy, contraceptives, and abortion.”</p>
 <p>EDUCATION</p>	<p>“The Democratic Party firmly believes that graduation from a quality public school and the opportunity to succeed in college must be the birthright of every child – not the privilege of the few. We must prepare all our students with the 21st-century skills they need to succeed by progressing to a new era of mutual responsibility in education.</p> <p>“We must set high standards for our children, but we must also hold ourselves accountable – our schools, our teachers, our parents, business leaders, our community and our elected leaders. And we must come together, form partnerships, and commit to providing the resources and reforms necessary to help every child reach their full potential. . . .</p> <p>“We need to adapt curricula and the school calendar to the needs of the 21st century; reform the schools of education that produce most of our teachers; promote public charter schools that are accountable; and streamline the certification process for those with valuable skills who want to shift careers and teach.”</p>	<p>“As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to choose a school for them which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental.</p> <p>“As far as possible, parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators. Public authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise.”</p> <p>(Paragraph 2229)</p>	<p>“All children should have access to an excellent education that empowers them to secure their own freedom and contribute to the betterment of our society.</p> <p>“We reaffirm the principles that have been the foundation of the nation’s educational progress toward that goal: accountability for student academic achievement; periodic testing on the fundamentals of learning, especially math and reading, history and geography; transparency, so parents and the general public know which schools best serve their students; and flexibility and freedom to innovate so schools and districts can best meet the needs of their students. . . .</p> <p>“Parents should be able to decide the learning environment that is best for their child. We support choice in education for all families, especially those with children trapped in dangerous and failing schools, whether through charter schools, vouchers, or tax credits for attending faith-based or other non-public schools, or the option of home schooling.”</p>



 <p>ISSUE</p>	<p>Democratic Party Platform</p>	<p><i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i></p>	<p>Republican Party Platform</p>
 <p>MARRIAGE</p>	<p>“We support the full inclusion of all families, including same-sex couples, in the life of our nation, and support equal responsibility, benefits, and protections. “We will enact a comprehensive bipartisan employment non-discrimination act. “We oppose the Defense of Marriage Act and all attempts to use this issue to divide us.”</p>	<p>“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.’ . . . God Himself is the author of marriage. “The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. “Marriage is not a purely human institution, despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures, and spiritual attitudes. These differences should not cause us to forget its common and permanent characteristics.” (Paragraphs 1601, 1603)</p>	<p>“Because our children’s future is best preserved within the traditional understanding of marriage, we call for a constitutional amendment that fully protects marriage as a union of a man and a woman, so that judges cannot make other arrangements equivalent to it. “In the absence of a national amendment, we support the right of the people of the various states to affirm traditional marriage through state initiatives. . . . “Republicans have been at the forefront of protecting traditional marriage laws, both in the states and in Congress. A Republican Congress enacted the Defense of Marriage Act, affirming the right of states not to recognize same-sex ‘marriages’ licensed in other states.”</p>
 <p>ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>“We will lead to defeat the epochal, man-made threat to the planet: climate change. . . . Never again will we sit on the sidelines, or stand in the way of collective action to tackle this global challenge. “Getting our own house in order is only a first step. We will invest in efficient and clean technologies at home while using our assistance policies and export promotions to help developing countries preserve biodiversity, curb deforestation, and leapfrog the carbon-energy-intensive stage of development.”</p>	<p>“The Seventh Commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. “Man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.” (Paragraph 2415)</p>	<p>“The same human economic activity that has brought freedom and opportunity to billions has also increased the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. While the scope and long-term consequences of this are the subject of ongoing scientific research, common sense dictates that the United States should take measured and reasonable steps today to reduce any impact on the environment. . . . “To reduce emissions in the short run, we will rely upon the power of new technologies, especially zero-emission energy sources such as nuclear and other alternate power sources.”</p>
 <p>WAR</p>	<p>“To renew American leadership in the world, we must first bring the Iraq war to a responsible end. Our men and women in uniform have performed admirably while sacrificing immeasurably. Our civilian leaders have failed them. “Iraq was a diversion from the fight against the terrorists who struck us on 9-11, and incompetent prosecution of the war by civilian leaders compounded the strategic blunder of choosing to wage it in the first place. “We will re-center American foreign policy by responsibly redeploying our combat forces from Iraq and refocusing them on urgent missions. “We will give our military a new mission: ending this war and giving Iraq back to its people. We will be as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in.”</p>	<p>“All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war. However, ‘as long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed.’ “The strict conditions for legitimate defense by military force require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time: The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition. “These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the ‘just war’ doctrine. The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.” (Paragraphs 2307-2309)</p>	<p>“The waging of war – and the achieving of peace – should never be micromanaged in a party platform, or on the floor of the Senate and House of Representatives for that matter. “In dealing with present conflicts and future crises, our next president must preserve all options. It would be presumptuous to specify them in advance and foolhardy to rule out any action deemed necessary for our security. . . . “A stable, unified, and democratic Iraqi nation is within reach. Our success in Iraq will deny al Qaeda a safe haven, limit Iranian influence in the Middle East, strengthen moderate forces there, and give us a strategic ally in the struggle against extremism. “To those who have sacrificed so much, we owe the commitment that American forces will leave that country in victory and with honor.”</p>



ISSUE

Democratic Party Platform

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Republican Party Platform

FAITH-BASED GROUPS

“Faith-based groups are not a replacement for government or secular non-profit programs; rather, they are yet another sector working to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

“We will empower grassroots faith-based and community groups to help meet challenges like poverty, ex-offender reentry, and illiteracy.

“At the same time, we can ensure that these partnerships do not endanger First Amendment protections – because there is no conflict between supporting faith-based institutions and respecting our Constitution.

“We will ensure that public funds are not used to proselytize or discriminate.”

“In spreading the spiritual goods of the faith, the Church has promoted, and often opened new paths for, the development of temporal goods . . . And so throughout the centuries has the Lord’s saying been verified: ‘Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.’

“For 2,000 years this sentiment has lived and endured in the soul of the Church, impelling souls then and now to the heroic charity of monastic farmers, liberators of slaves, healers of the sick, and messengers of faith, civilization, and science to all generations and all peoples for the sake of creating the social conditions capable of offering to everyone possible a life worthy of man and of a Christian.”

(Paragraphs 1941-1942)

“Decentralized decision-making in the place of official controls empowers individuals and groups to tackle social problems in partnership with government. Bureaucracy is no longer a credible approach to helping those in need. This is especially true in light of alternatives such as faith-based organizations, which tend to have a greater degree of success than others in dealing with problems such as substance abuse and domestic violence. . . .

“We affirm every citizen’s right to apply religious values to public policy and the right of faith-based organizations to participate fully in public programs without renouncing their beliefs, removing religious objects or symbols, or becoming subject to government-imposed hiring practices.”

IMMIGRATION

“We are committed to pursuing tough, practical, and humane immigration reform in the first year of the next administration. We cannot continue to allow people to enter the United States undetected, undocumented, and unchecked. The American people are a welcoming and generous people, but those who enter our country’s borders illegally, and those who employ them, disrespect the rule of the law. We need to secure our borders, and support additional personnel, infrastructure, and technology on the border and at our ports of entry. . . .

“For the millions living here illegally but otherwise playing by the rules, we must require them to come out of the shadows and get right with the law. We support a system that requires undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, pay taxes, learn English, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens. They are our neighbors, and we can help them become full tax-paying, law-abiding, productive members of society.”

“The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.

“Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants’ duties toward their country of adoption.

“Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws, and to assist in carrying civic burdens.”

(Paragraph 2241)

“Today’s immigrants are walking in the steps of most other Americans’ ancestors, seeking the American dream and contributing culturally and economically to our nation. We celebrate the industry and love of liberty of these fellow Americans.

“Both government and the private sector must do more to foster legally present immigrants’ integration into American life to advance respect for the rule of law and a common American identity. It is a national disgrace that the first experience most new Americans have is with a dysfunctional immigration bureaucracy defined by delay and confusion; we will no longer tolerate those failures. . . .

“Border security is essential to national security. In an age of terrorism, drug cartels, and criminal gangs, allowing millions of unidentified persons to enter and remain in this country poses grave risks to the sovereignty of the United States and the security of its people. We simply must be able to track who is entering and leaving our country.”

ECONOMY

“In this time of economic transformation and crisis, we must be stewards of this economy more than ever before.

“We will maintain fiscal responsibility, so that we do not mortgage our children’s future on a mountain of debt. We can do this at the same time that we invest in our future. We will restore fairness and responsibility to our tax code. We will bring balance back to the housing markets, so that people do not have to lose their homes. And we will encourage personal savings, so that our economy remains strong and Americans can live well in their retirements. . . .

“We do believe that government has a role to play in advancing our common prosperity: by providing stable macroeconomic and financial conditions for sustained growth; by demanding transparency; and by ensuring fair competition in the marketplace.”

“Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical, or political vacuum. On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. Hence, the principal task of the state is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labors and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly. . . .

“Another task of the state is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. . . .”

“Those responsible for business enterprises are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of profits.

“Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment.”

(Paragraphs 2431-2432)



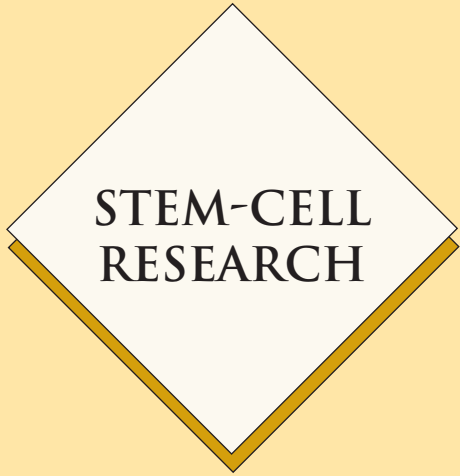

“America’s free economy . . . is an engine of charity, empowering everything from Sabbath collection plate to great endowments. It creates opportunity, rewards self-reliance and hard work, and unleashes productive energies that other societies can only imagine.

“Today, our economy faces challenges due to high energy costs. Our task is to strengthen our economy and build a greater degree of security – in availability of jobs, in accessibility of health care, in portability of pensions, and in affordability of energy. . . .

“Economic freedom expands the prosperity pie; government can only divide it up. That is why Republicans advocate lower taxes, reasonable regulation, and smaller, smarter government The Republican Party will put a stop to both social engineering and corporate handouts by simplifying tax policy, eliminating special deals, and putting those saved dollars back into the taxpayers’ pockets.”





 <p>ISSUE</p>	<p>Democratic Party Platform</p>	<p><i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i></p>	<p>Republican Party Platform</p>
 <p>HEALTH CARE</p>	<p>“Families and individuals should have the option of keeping the coverage they have or choosing from a wide array of health insurance plans, including many private health insurance options and a public plan. “Coverage should be made affordable for all Americans with subsidies provided through tax credits and other means. “Health care should be a shared responsibility between employers, workers, insurers, providers and government. All Americans should have coverage they can afford; employers should have incentives to provide coverage to their workers; insurers and providers should ensure high quality affordable care; and the government should ensure that health insurance is affordable and provides meaningful coverage.”</p>	<p>“Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good. “Concern for the health of its citizens requires that society help in the attainment of living conditions that allow them to grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment, and social assistance.” (Paragraph 2288)</p>	<p>“Republicans believe the key to real reform is to give control of the health care system to patients and their health care providers, not bureaucrats in government or business. . . . “Radical restructuring of health care would be unwise. We want all Americans to be able to choose the best health care provider, hospital, and health coverage for their needs. “We believe that real reform is about improving your access to a health care provider, your control over care, and your ability to afford that care. . . . “While delivering control of health coverage to families and individuals, Republicans will also advance a variety of targeted reforms to improve the quality of care, lower costs, and help Americans – men, women, and children – live longer and healthier lives.”</p>
 <p>STEM-CELL RESEARCH</p>	<p>“Research should be based on science, not ideology. For the millions of Americans and their families suffering from debilitating physical and emotional effects of disease, time is a precious commodity, and it is running out. Yet, over the past eight years, the current Administration has not only failed to promote biomedical and stem cell research, it has actively stood in the way of that research. “We cannot tolerate any further inaction or obstruction. “We need to invest in biomedical research and stem cell research, so that we are at the leading edge of prevention and treatment. This includes adequate funding for research into diseases such as heart disease, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, breast cancer, diabetes, autism, and other common and rare diseases, and disorders.”</p>	<p>“Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being. . . . “It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material.’ ‘Certain attempts to influence chromosomal or genetic inheritance are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities. Such manipulations are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his integrity and identity,’ which are unique and unrepeatable.” (Paragraphs 2274-2275) <i>Editor’s note:</i> The Catholic Church is opposed to embryonic stem-cell research, which destroys innocent human life. The Church supports, on the other hand, adult stem-cell research, which does not destroy life and which has shown greater promise for curing disease.</p>	<p>“Federal research dollars should be spent as though lives are at stake – because, in fact, they are. . . . “Taxpayer-funded medical research must be based on sound science, with a focus on both prevention and treatment, and in accordance with the humane ethics of the Hippocratic Oath. “In that regard, we call for a major expansion of support for the stem-cell research that now shows amazing promise and offers the greatest hope for scores of diseases – with adult stem cells, umbilical cord blood, and cells reprogrammed into pluripotent stem cells – without the destruction of embryonic human life. “We call for a ban on human cloning and a ban on the creation of or experimentation on human embryos for research purposes.”</p>
 <p>CRIME</p>	<p>“As Democrats, we are committed to being smart on crime. That means being tough on violent crime, funding strategic and effective community policing, and holding offenders accountable, and it means getting tough on the root causes of crime by investing in successful crime prevention, including proven initiatives that get youth and nonviolent offenders back on track. “We will support communities as they work to save their residents from the violence that plagues our streets.”</p>	<p>“Preserving the common good of society requires rendering the aggressor unable to inflict harm. For this reason, the traditional teaching of the Church has acknowledged . . . the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty. . . . If non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people’s lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity with the dignity of the human person.” (Paragraphs 2266-2267)</p>	<p>“Republicans remain the party of vigorous action against crime and the party that empowers the law-abiding by protecting their right to keep and bear arms for self-protection. “Our national experience over the past twenty years has shown that vigilance, tough yet fair prosecutors, meaningful sentences, protection of victims’ rights, and limits on judicial discretion protect the innocent by keeping criminals off the streets.”</p>