

§2300 POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND VOTER EDUCATION

The Catholic Church, its parishes and Church organizations are prohibited by federal law from participating in partisan political activities. This prohibition is absolute. The tax-exempt status of a parish or Church organization may be revoked if there is a violation of the law, and other penalties and taxes may also be imposed on any funds spent on prohibited political activities.

However, the Church does have a role in politics and public policy formation through activities such as:

- *Educating Catholics and others on the teachings of the Church as they relate to social policies.*
- *Analyzing and measuring policies against the values of the Gospel.*
- *Speaking out on issues, such as those involving the life and dignity of the human person, social justice, the promotion of the common good, and the life of the Church in society.*
- *Encouraging voters to participate fully in the political process.*

The following policies and procedures are adapted from the “Guidelines on Political Activities for Parishes and Catholic Church Organizations,” published by the Catholic Conference of Illinois and available online at:

www.catholicconferenceofillinois.org/bins/site/ftp/Guidelines%20-%20political%20activities.doc.

Further guidance on political activities can be found on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website at www.usccb.org/ogc/guidelines.shtml.

§2301 CLEARLY PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

2301.1. Policy Among the activities that parishes and Church organizations are clearly prohibited from participating in include:

- a) Endorsing a candidate or political party.
- b) Donating money or other resources to a candidate or political party.
- c) Exclusively offering the parish’s or Church organization’s facilities to a candidate or political party.

§2302 VOTER EDUCATION MATERIALS

2302.1. Policy Only those voter education materials that come from or are approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Conference of Illinois or the Archdiocese of Chicago may be published by or distributed in parishes, schools or other entities of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

§2303 VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES

2303.1. Policy Nonpartisan voter registration and “Get out the vote” drives are permissible.

Procedures

- a) The event should not demonstrate a preference or bias toward a particular candidate, political party, or voting position.
- b) No election campaign materials or other materials produced by candidates or political parties are to be distributed, and the event should not be conducted in cooperation with any political campaign or party.
- c) The event should be open to everyone and not targeted to individuals known to support a particular candidate.

§2304 ISSUE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

2304.1. Policy Issue advocacy campaigns can be conducted, including educational efforts about issues and legislation and the encouragement of letter writing campaigns and other contacts with government officials, as long as the campaign is conducted in a nonpartisan manner.

2304.2. Policy The position taken on an issue must be consistent with the Church’s position and Catholic Social Teaching.

Procedure

- a) When issue advocacy campaigns coincide with election campaigns, an individual candidate’s position on the issue should not be identified nor compared with the Church’s position on that issue.
- b) Catholic Social Teaching should be the framework from which we address issues in the political arena. Catholic Social Teaching includes the following major themes:
 - Life and Dignity of the Human Person
 - Protection of and Participation in the Family and the Community
 - Rights of the Human Person and Each Person’s Responsibilities
 - Care for the Poor and Vulnerable
 - Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
 - Solidarity as One Human Family
 - Care for God’s Creation

§2305 DISTRIBUTION OF CAMPAIGN MATERIALS ON THE PROPERTY OF PARISH OR CHURCH ORGANIZATION

2305.1. Policy Parishes and Church organizations should avoid any participation in or authorization of the distribution of campaign literature or biased voter education materials on their property. However, a parish or Church organization is not obligated to actively monitor and prevent campaign leafleting of cars in its parking lot.

Procedure

Political signs should not be placed on property owned or rented for official business by a parish or Church organization.