



ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTA FE

The Catholic Center

July, 2020

Policy and Guidelines Pertaining to Prohibited Campaign Activities in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe

While each person is called to exercise his or her civic duty as a faithful citizen, the Archdiocese and the parishes must not engage in prohibited political campaign activity. This is to ensure that the Church does not become entangled in politics and its inherent divisions and that the Archdiocese and the parishes continue to qualify for tax exempt status.

Violation of these prohibitions can have serious tax consequences, including loss of deductibility of contributions to the parish as well as loss of tax exempt status for the Archdiocese. Loss of tax status may seem a secular concern, but could result in the loss of up to one-third of parish income and a resultant loss of ministerial capabilities.

Unfortunately, the line dividing activities permitted and prohibited activities is often unclear. The restrictions are based on detailed guidelines issued by the General Counsel of the USCCB. They can be found on the web at www.usccb.org.

One specific activity that merits particular attention is the preparation/distribution of candidate questionnaire responses, candidates' voting records and similar "voter education" materials. Due to the technicality of the regulations, *do not get involved in this unless the material specifically comes from the USCCB, the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops, or the Catholic Center.*

- Permission should not be given for voter education materials, leaflets or other campaign literature of a candidate or interest group to be distributed on Church property or distributed on behalf of the Church. We are not responsible if people without permission distribute materials on cars or our property.
- Parishes and Catholic organizations should not make statements, either oral or written, supporting or opposing any candidate for elective public office, any slate of candidates, a political party or political action committee (PAC). This would include statements made in a homily, a parish bulletin, or distribution of filled-in sample ballots.
- In addition, parishes and 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 the Church's position on issues.
- Individual candidates 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 and it is made clear to all that all candidates were invited.*
- Parishes and Catholic organizations may not provide or solicit financial support to or for any candidate, PAC, or political party. Likewise, they may not provide or solicit in-kind support, such as free use of staff or facilities. Nor should we make available any mailing lists to candidates, parties or PACs.
- No political ads promoting or opposing a candidate are to be accepted in parish bulletins or parish web sites.
- Pastors should refrain from equating a vote for a certain candidate as a morally sinful act, but instead appeal to the primacy of conscience formed by Catholic teaching.

None of this should inhibit clergy from preaching and teaching moral and social positions espoused by the Church. The statement of the Bishops on political responsibility, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call To Political Responsibility* (revised with a new 2019 Introductory Letter), encourages us to do so. Please refer to <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/> and www.civilizeit.org for the document, bulletin inserts on civil dialogue and conscience formation, homily suggestions, prayer suggestions, new videos, and do's and don'ts.

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