

In the Heartland

Bishop Richard Pates

Sorting through the 2012 Elections

The Republican and Democratic parties have completed their national conventions, Labor Day has passed and the quadrennial voting cycle for President has begun in earnest.

With the extraordinarily frequent visit of candidates to Iowa and the plethora of advertising and grassroots organizing, we, in Iowa, are becoming acutely aware that Iowa is a battleground state.

If that is the case, we might ask the question, does this make our votes all the more weighty? Reflecting on this, hopefully, would lead to two conclusions: 1) to educate myself as best I can on the pivotal issues at stake and 2) to make an absolute pledge to vote.

The diocese and our parishes are inundated with a super abundance of materials regarding the election. After careful consideration, the Presbyteral Council has recommended and I, in turn, establish as policy for the diocese that only two documents be distributed in our parishes and institutions. They are:

- 1) Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A call to political responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States with introductory note (available at: www.usccb.org).
- 2) Faithful Citizenship for Iowa Catholics published by the Iowa Catholic Conference (available at: www.iowacatholicconference.org).

The Knights of Columbus of Iowa have also received permission to conduct non-partisan voter drives at our parishes.

Advocacy for or endorsement of a particular candidate or political party is not permitted and jeopardizes the tax exempt status of our Catholic churches. No signs or materials supporting a particular party or candidate can be placed in or distributed within church/institutional property.

If taken seriously and considered from a Catholic perspective, I feel that individual voters will have much to reflect upon in the materials that can be distributed in our churches.

The Iowa Catholic Conference (ICC) provides through its website (www.iowacatholicconference.org) a list of candidates seeking office nationally and in the state of Iowa. As a starter in your deliberations as to whom to vote for, I suggest you either research or ask candidates directly the following questions which are provided by the Iowa Catholic Conference. An affirmative answer to each of the following would be

consistent with the positions of the Church and the ICC. An exercise that might be helpful to yourself in evaluating your own reaction to the answers is the questions: which self is asking the question – my republican self, my democratic self, my independent self or my Christian/Catholic self?

Questions for candidates for office.

Do you support:

- Protecting and supporting human life from conception until natural death?
- Prohibiting “webcam” abortions?
- Maintaining Iowa’s ban on euthanasia/assisted suicide?
- Rejecting all initiatives to compromise the First Amendment and its guarantee of religious freedom and any imposition by government in authentic religious beliefs and practices as well as rejecting unjust laws that impinge on legitimate exercise of the freedom of conscience?
- Financial assistance for parents who wish to send their children to a nonpublic school?
- Legislation that helps all immigrants provide for their families and become participating members of their communities?
- Initiatives that would make health care more readily available and affordable to all Iowans, including immigrants and their children?
- Maintaining Iowa’s status as a “no death penalty” state?
- Amending Iowa’s Constitution to recognize marriage as a union of one man and one woman?
- A fair and just tax system, a just living wage and fair and reasonable labor practices by employers?
- Measures to preserve, protect, and improve the quality of the air, water, and land in Iowa?

To each voter: Thank you for taking seriously your privilege and responsibility. Ours is a government of the people, by the people, for the people.