

CAPITOL

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REPORT



The Newsletter of the
Wisconsin Catholic Conference

Faithful Citizenship: It's About Voting and More

All Catholics are called to participate in the political process. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, "All Christians must be aware of their own specific vocation within the political community. It is for them to give an example by their sense of responsibility and their service of the common good." (*The Church in the Modern World* 75).

This political participation can take many forms, as described in the recent statement, *Forming Con-*

sciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States (2007).

Within our parish or church organizations, Catholics can partake in activities that are nonpartisan in nature (see page 2). As individuals, we are encouraged to be involved in candidate campaigns and debates. As faithful citizens, we are called to work in the public square with people of other faiths, or no faith at all, on issues that advance respect for all human life and promote the common good.

But however we choose to be involved and whatever the level of our individual involvement, each of us who is 18 years or older has an obligation to vote.

To help Catholics become informed and involved, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) has developed several resources. One of these is a list of questions for

candidates (see page 3). As Catholics, we are strongly encouraged to learn where our candidates stand on these issues.

Copies of the question cards are also available from the WCC or from the individual diocesan offices for social concerns.

In addition, the WCC has prepared a nine-week bulletin insert series on *Faithful Citizenship* (see the July 2008 issue of the *Capitol Report* for details). The series is also available on the WCC website. Also on the website is the WCC's complete *Guidelines for Church Involvement in Electoral Politics*.

**"In the Catholic tradition,
responsible citizenship is a virtue
and participation in political life
is a moral obligation."**

Faithful Citizenship

September 2008
Vol. 2008 No. 3

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Director's Corner

John Huebscher, Executive Director

As some of you may know, I spent four very rewarding years as an aide to the late State Senator Clifford (Tiny) Krueger who served in the Senate for over 30 years. My time with Tiny taught me many valuable lessons about Wisconsin government, including how to influence policy makers.

One teacher was a man named Art Salzwedel. Art was the Mayor of Medford, Wisconsin. He was also a model of how to be influential.

Art and Tiny knew each other well, but that alone did not account for Art's influence. Art was influential because over the years he took the time to keep Tiny informed of his views. Whenever a state issue affected Medford or local government in general, Art would write Tiny a letter.

His letters were short, to the point, and respectful. Art explained the bill's impact. Whenever possible, he suggested an alternative. When he couldn't, he simply told Tiny the bill was a bad idea. There were times when he didn't have to write. Upon seeing that a bill affected city government, Tiny would tell us, "Find out what Art thinks about this."

Mayor Art Salzwedel had the sort of influence one can't buy with money or fame. He had "clout" with Tiny because he took the time to get to know him, to do his homework on issues that mattered to him, and to share what he knew and believed.

There are Catholics all across our state that can have that kind of influence. Some already know their leaders and write them regularly. Many others can do what Art did and share their knowledge and expertise.

This campaign season is a good time to start. Candidates for the legislature and Congress want to meet as many people as possible. Now is the time to lay the groundwork for a good relationship with them. Now is the time to begin the task of being not only a "faithful citizen," but also an influential one.

Recommended Church Activities

For reasons that are both theological and legal, the Church's involvement in public life does **not** include endorsing or opposing candidates for election to public office. However, there are still many things parish groups are encouraged to do in an election season. Here is a partial list of recommended activities from the WCC's *Guidelines for Church Involvement in Electoral Politics*.

1. Continue to educate Catholics about the principles of Catholic social teaching.
2. Publish and distribute issue materials without reference to specific candidates or political parties.
3. Help register new voters and "get-out-the-vote" campaigns.
4. Encourage Catholics, as citizens, to become involved in political activities.
5. Organize committees for political education.
6. Develop legislative networks to review legislative activity and monitor the positions of elected officials. It is advisable to publish the ongoing record of public officials and legislative bodies at reasonable intervals, rather than doing so exclusively during an election campaign.
7. Make church facilities available for multi-issue candidate forums whether hosted by parishes, diocesan groups, or other neutral organizations.
8. Encourage attendance at public forums.
9. Develop parish committees to help those with disabilities and/or elders to vote (e.g., rides to the polls, information on absentee voting).
10. Assist non-English speaking persons to register to vote and to learn about issues; provide registration and other materials in native language.
11. Organize letter-writing campaigns on legislative issues.
12. Develop special outreach programs to help the disadvantaged in the electoral process.

Faithful Citizenship 2008 Candidate Questions

The questions below are intended to help guide Catholics in their efforts to make moral and prudential decisions about candidates and public policies. Please use these questions when contacting candidates for public office.

WHERE DO YOUR CANDIDATES STAND ON:

Right to Life & Dignity of the Human Person

- Restricting abortion to the greatest extent possible under the law?
- Preserving the state ban on assisted suicide and euthanasia?
- Preserving the state ban on the death penalty?
- Prohibiting public funding of research that destroys human embryos?
- Banning the cloning of human embryos?

Family Life

- Preserving marriage as a lifelong union between a man and a woman?
- Expanding educational choice for all families?
- Increasing public support for pregnant women in need?
- Allowing a state tax credit for adoption expenses?
- Adopting an immigration policy that does not separate families?

Poor & Vulnerable / Dignity of Workers

- Increasing the state minimum wage to keep pace with inflation?
- Assuring basic support for families with children living in poverty?
- Increasing funding for safe and affordable housing?
- Ensuring universal access to healthcare, including mental health care?
- Providing community-based treatment instead of incarceration to non-violent drug and alcohol offenders?
- Protecting the right of conscience for workers and religious institutions?

Care of God's Creation

- Supporting farmers who implement environmentally sound management practices?
- Conserving energy and finding alternative energy sources?
- Preserving our state's natural resources?

CAPITOL REPORT is published quarterly by the WCC to inform Catholics and policy decision makers of the WCC's activities and positions on state and federal legislation. Subscriptions are \$5 per calendar year.

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Bishop Swain to Speak at *Catholics at the Capitol*

Most Reverend Paul J. Swain, the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, will speak to Catholics in Wisconsin on how to effectively engage in faithful citizenship at *Catholics at the Capitol 2009*.

Catholics at the Capitol is convened biannually in the spring of each new legislative session. The event is designed to help attendees better understand the legislative process, familiarize themselves with important emerging public policy issues, and enhance their advocacy skills. The day concludes with an opportunity for Catholics to directly share their viewpoints with legislators, as attendees are encouraged to make visits to legislative offices within the Capitol.

Bishop Swain's dedication to public service and story of conversion to the Catholic faith provide a dynamic example of how faith can guide us in a life of service. Born in Newark, New York, Bishop Swain attended Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio, where he received a degree in history. Bishop Swain then attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, earning a Masters in Political Science (1967).

After serving as a United States Air Force Intelligence Officer and earning a bronze star in Vietnam, Bishop

Swain obtained his law degree from the UW-Madison in 1974. After briefly practicing in Madison, Bishop Swain served as legal counsel and director of policy for Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus (1979-1983).

Bishop Swain converted to Catholicism in 1983 and attended Blessed John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts. He was ordained as a priest of the Diocese of Madison on May 27, 1988.

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|  | MARK YOUR CALENDARS Catholics at the Capitol 2009 March 31, 2009 Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center Madison, WI |  |
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After ordination, Bishop Swain held several pastoral assignments, including associate pastor of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish, pastor of St. Mary of Pine Bluff and St. Bernard of Middleton

parishes, and rector/pastor of St. Raphael Cathedral, St. Patrick Parish, and Holy Redeemer Parish in Madison.

Bishop Swain also held several diocesan leadership positions, including Assistant to the Bishop, Vice Chancellor, Moderator of the Curia, and Vocations Director. He also served as Vicar General to Bishop William H. Bullock and Bishop Robert C. Morlino.

Bishop Swain was ordained and installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Sioux Falls on October 26, 2006.