



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**EYE ON THE CAPITOL**  
**July 10, 2008**

### **ELECTION SEASON PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR "FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP"**

By John Huebscher, Executive Director

July 8 was the deadline by which anyone interested in running for county, state or federal offices in 2008 must file nomination papers to be certified for a place on the fall election ballot. Thus, the campaign season is underway.

This means Catholics focus anew on the ongoing responsibilities of their vocation as "faithful citizens." This vocation involves several responsibilities. First, we need to reflect on the state of the world in which we live. This means we consider the problems, opportunities, and challenges facing our communities, our state, and our nation. This in turn leads us to identify those issues and policy questions that can change for better or for worse the conditions and environment that influence the common good locally and globally. Then we need to assess those seeking office to discern if their talents, capabilities, and policy priorities are a good fit for the offices they seek and the issues they will confront.

Most of us will be studious observers. Some will be active participants as candidates, campaign workers, and shapers of opinion. These caring men and women deserve our thanks for their involvement in our political system. We may not agree with them. Indeed, we may vote against some of them. But whether or not we support them or their views, we need to recognize that our system of self-government would not exist without them.

For our part, we at the WCC will provide educational and formational materials to help Catholics who want to reflect on how their faith and the political issues of the day intersect. The materials include a nine-week series of bulletin inserts. The series covers the main points found in the U.S. bishops' 2007 statement, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*. Four of the weekly inserts discuss the principles of Catholic social doctrine and their application to the political sphere. Two inserts also explain the importance of developing a well-formed conscience. The materials in this series cannot answer every question or probe every issue of concern to faithful citizens. However, they will offer a place to start.

These materials also include a copy of the WCC *Guidelines for Church Involvement in Electoral Politics*. These *Guidelines* remind diocesan and parish leaders that sharing information about issues and Catholic teaching is encouraged. So is sponsorship of voter registration drives and candidate forums that are open to all candidates for a given office.

The *Guidelines* also emphasize that church facilities and resources may not be used to support or oppose candidates in any way. The *Guidelines* reflect the bishops' belief that the activity of persuading voters to vote for a specific candidate is for laywomen and laymen, not clergy and church officials. While this persuasion is encouraged in the public square and in door-to-door conversations between voters, it should not take place on church property or in parish bulletins.

We at the Wisconsin Catholic Conference hope you find the materials we provide useful and that they will help make Catholics among the most informed and most engaged citizens in this election year.