

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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WCC SHARES GUIDELINES FOR ELECTION RELATED ACTIVITY

As election season moves into full swing, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference is once again providing dioceses and parishes with the WCC *Guidelines for Church Involvement in Electoral Politics*. The *Guidelines* encourage active citizenship, while clarifying the activities and efforts that are appropriate for Church officials and agencies during a campaign for elected office.

WCC staff and the diocesan newspaper editors first developed the *Guidelines* in 1983. The WCC revised the *Guidelines* in 1990, and initiated another review shortly after the 2000 elections to address the advent of Internet technology. The *Guidelines* were revised again earlier this year to offer additional direction on issue-based, voter education resources.

Like the three previous editions, the revised document emphasizes the importance of civic involvement by Catholics.

“Underlying these guidelines is the Catholic view that ‘every believer is called to faithful citizenship, to become an informed, active and responsible participant in the political process,’” the document states.

The *Guidelines* also affirm that “the Church has both a duty and a right to call attention to the moral and religious dimensions of public issues. As it does this, it applies Gospel values as a norm against which social policies and political activities are measured. It also shares its vision of how our call as believing Christians compels us to work for the transformation of society in ways that make it more just.”

The *Guidelines* recommend issue-based education and advocacy activities for church related groups. The document also spells out those activities that are prohibited, such as endorsing or opposing candidates for public office.

The document directs Catholics that take on the responsibility of encouraging faithful citizenship at election time to turn to the Wisconsin Catholic Conference for advice and approval of various educational materials, for example candidate surveys or scorecards.

“Elections provide great teachable moments within the faith community. The WCC wants Church based voter education efforts to flourish, but these efforts should conform to what is appropriate both theologically and legally within the Church community,” emphasized WCC Executive Director John Huebscher.

A copy of the complete text of the *Guidelines* may be found on the WCC’s web site at www.wisconsincatholic.org or may be obtained from the WCC by calling 608-257-0004.

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