

Considerations before Voting on Constitutional Amendments

Elections are not just about candidates but often involve decisions on issues. As we are called to faithful citizenship before voting for an individual, we must properly form our conscience before marking our ballot in support of or opposition to a proposed amendment. Looking beyond how we are affected personally, review of an issue must also involve an assessment and an integration of the interests of all of our state's citizens. Using the fundamentals of Catholic Social Teaching to guide us as we form our conscience, we must take into consideration how the issues before us address the following questions.

Does the amendment promote and defend the life and dignity of the human person?

All human life is sacred and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral society. A measure of any proposed policy is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. Does it protect human life in all stages, from conception until natural death? Does it value life as God's creation not a creation of our own ingenuity? Does it prevent conflicts and promote respect for others?

Does the amendment honor family, community, and participation in society?

All of us have a responsibility to participate in our community, to contribute to the common good, to share what we have and to seek the good of others as though it were one's own good. Strong marriages and healthy family life are essential to the well being of our society. Does the issue support and strengthen marriage and family as a central social institution? Does it promote religious freedom and the ability to participate in a pluralistic society? Does it enhance or limit the capacity of individuals to grow within their community and to participate in the development of societal laws and policies?

Does the amendment protect the human rights and responsibilities?

Every person has a fundamental right to life and human decency. With these rights come responsibilities to one another, to our families, and to the broader society as a whole. Does the policy promote basic human rights necessary for a stable and healthy society? Does it protect a parent's right and duty to provide for their children, including the ability to access educational opportunities of their choice?

Does the amendment address the needs of the poor and vulnerable?

Scripture instructs us to put the needs of our most vulnerable first. We must examine how a proposed policy will affect the poor, elderly and disabled residents of our state. Does it place a proportionally higher burden on those who are less able to bear that burden? Does it provide a greater benefit for those who already have ample resources and neglect those who are unable to speak for themselves?

Does the amendment protect the dignity of work and the rights of workers?

Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. The dignity and basic rights of the worker are to be respected. Is an individual's access to productive work, a fair wage, a safe work environment and the ability to financially support oneself and one's family protected? Does the issue support the right to private property and economic initiative?

Does the amendment advance solidarity?

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote justice and peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

Does the amendment address the protection and care of God's creation?

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to care for and protect the earth and our environment. This challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that we cannot ignore.