



Archdiocese of Los Angeles

3424
Wilshire
Boulevard

Los Angeles
California
90010-2241

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Parishes, Schools and ACC Community

FROM: Reverend Brian Nunes, Moderator of the Curia, Vicar General

DATE: September 16, 2022

SUBJECT: ARCHDIOCESAN GUIDELINES FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES - 2022

REMINDER OF OUR CIVIC ROLE AND DUTIES FOR THE NOVEMBER 2022 ELECTION

As the 2022 election season unfolds, pastoral leaders and parishioners are once again called to exercise their civic duty. According to our teaching, Catholics have a religious and moral obligation to be faithful participants in civic affairs. We carry out this duty in many ways as individuals and through our Church. This year there are many local, state, and Congressional elections and several ballot propositions at local and state levels, some of which may be of particular significance, so faithful participation is particularly important.

At the Archdiocese, we encourage everyone to fulfill this duty as faithful, informed, and involved civic participants. As a tax-exempt entity, we also have specific rights and obligations while participating in the electoral and ballot proposition processes. This Memorandum is a reminder and update of those obligations.

The Office of Life, Justice and Peace at the Archdiocese can also provide useful guidance. Contact the Director of Public Affairs, Isaac Cuevas at icuevas@la-archdiocese.org or 213-637- 7484.

If you receive any inquiries or requests from media/news outlets or filming/production companies about any matters concerning elections, propositions or campaigns, please direct them to the Archdiocese Office of Media Relations at (213) 637-7215 or communications@la-archdiocese.org

WHAT WE CAN DO

Tax-exempt organizations may engage in lobbying and electioneering. Still, they must comply with a complicated set of federal and state laws limiting campaign and lobbying activities, which require detailed reporting and disclosures. Adherence to the limitations is particularly important in California, where ballot initiatives on social justice and fiscal issues are common. Catholic organizations may address the moral aspects of public policy issues or pursue a legislative advocacy program. We encourage you to become informed on these issues by joining and participating in the [California Catholic Conference's Catholic Legislative Updates](#).

Parishes are encouraged to organize nonpartisan voter registration and voter mobilization drives. Parishes can also provide parishioners with a moral and ethical context to discuss and understand issues. Mobilization and education must be done following the [Guidelines for Lobbying and Electioneering in the ADLA Handbook](#).

It is important to remember that current technology includes informal communications posted on social media, and live-streamed events that become broadly available in real time. The result is that even informal sharing of information and perspectives may be communicated broadly and preserved permanently. To avoid unintended results, it is particularly important to consider and follow all Guidelines in any communications or interactions.

ELECTION MATERIALS

In the Archdiocese, we only use materials pre-approved and distributed by the Archdiocese, the California Catholic Conference, or the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

This year, the California Catholic Conference and the Archdiocese are taking an active position to oppose Proposition 1, a proposed amendment to the California State Constitution that would permanently expand and increase access to abortion in California, including through taxpayer-funded late-term abortions.

The California Catholic Conference has prepared materials for parishes, schools, clergy, and parishioners concerning what advocacy and political action is appropriate and what is not appropriate, including materials opposing the adoption of Proposition 1. The Office of Life, Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese will be distributing those materials to each parish by mail.

LIMITATIONS ON WHAT WE CAN DO

[Section 501\(c\)\(3\) of the Internal Revenue Code](#) prohibits tax exempt organizations, including Catholic and all other religious organizations, from participating or intervening in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. This prohibition has been interpreted by the IRS and the courts as absolute. In other words, tax-exempt organizations

may not support any candidate or a slate of candidates in a partisan election. Any violations jeopardize our tax-exempt status.

Contrary to popular belief, the 501(c)(3) prohibitions are not based on the constitutional separation of church and state; they were added to the 1954 Internal Revenue Code as a response by then-Senator Lyndon Johnson to tax-exempt organizations which were funding a challenge to his re-election. The prohibitions apply to all tax-exempt organizations, not just religious institutions.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR WHAT WE DO

The California Fair Political Practices Commission oversees all lobbying and political efforts, including support of ballot initiatives by non-profits in California. Specific restrictions and detailed reporting obligations apply to any expenditure for lobbying or similar advocacy efforts. **All reporting obligations are coordinated by the Archdiocese.** The Archdiocesan requirements must be followed, without exception. Materials concerning the reporting requirements are being sent with this Memorandum, in the materials being distributed to each parish by mail and will be available on the Archdiocesan website at lacatholics.org/prop1-resources/. These materials include the Independent Expenditures Reporting Fact Sheet and the [Proposition 1 Reporting Form](#).

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES CONCERNING CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

In addition to the resources being provided and found on the Archdiocese website at lacatholics.org/prop1-resources/ the following are useful references:

- [Internal Revenue Service Frequently Asked Questions About the Ban on Political Campaign Intervention by 501\(c\)\(3\) Organizations](#)
- [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Political Activity Guidelines](#)
- [California Catholic Conference](#)

Again, I encourage you to become faithful, informed civic participants and go to the citizenship section of our website and review the listed materials.

If you have any questions, please contact Isaac Cuevas, Director of Public Affairs, at (213) 637-7484, Michael Donaldson, Director, Office of Life, Justice and Peace, at (213) 637-7047 or Margaret Graf, General Counsel at (213) 637-7511.