



NATIONAL PREAMBLE

Election 2012: Catholics Vote for the Common Good

As Catholics faced with critical choices during this election year, we come together as faithful citizens guided by the Gospel commands to love our neighbors, protect the most vulnerable and hold the powerful accountable. We are also “values voters” – Catholic priests, brothers, women religious and lay Catholics – who believe the narrow agenda of the religious right does not speak for most people of faith.

As Catholics who defend the sanctity of human life, we stand up for the unborn, the homeless, the inmate on death row, the environment and our neighbors suffering from hunger because all life is created in the image of God.

- ◆ **At a time when our nation is plagued by the highest poverty rate in five decades and the richest 400 Americans now own more wealth than half of all Americans combined, we reject a radical individualism that threatens a commitment to the common good.**
- ◆ **At a time of budget cutting and debt reduction, we believe fiscal responsibility must be rooted in economic fairness and not cause more hardship for the struggling middle class and low-income families.**
- ◆ **At a time when workers’ rights are under assault, we stand with our bishops and Church teaching that affirm the vital role of unions.**
- ◆ **While some elected officials and candidates demonize government, we join religious leaders from diverse faith traditions who have called for a “Circle of Protection” to defend government programs that help the most vulnerable.**

Our economy needs a moral foundation and should serve all Americans, not simply the privileged few. The priorities of Wall Street bankers and political parties must not be confused with the teachings of Jesus. Those who insist that tax breaks for the wealthy must be paid for by cuts to programs that literally save lives do not embody the spirit of the Gospel. Those who think it’s “class warfare” when millionaires and billionaires are asked to contribute to the common good should consider what class is winning when 46 million people – including one in five children – live in poverty.

This election raises essential questions and presents stark choices. Can we address our fiscal challenges without shredding social safety nets that help those most in need? Should insurance companies profit from denying care to the sick, or will we defend health care reform? Will we protect the environment or continue to deny threats to God’s creation? Are we still a nation that believes all immigrants should be treated with dignity? Are we all in this together, or are we simply looking out for ourselves? These are profound questions about values and the kind of country we will leave to future generations. We commit ourselves to putting our faith into action during this election year, speaking up for those without a voice and holding candidates and elected officials accountable to the common good.

Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good – Catholics United – Conference of Major Superiors of Men – Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach – Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph – Franciscan Action Network – Franciscan Friars (Eastern Province) – Good Shepherd Sisters – Leadership Conference of Women Religious – Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns – NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby – Pax Christi USA – Pax Romana – Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

PENNSYLVANIA

We, Catholics of Pennsylvania have inherited a moral obligation to our state and to our nation come together as faithful citizens guided by the Gospel commands to **love our neighbors, protect the most vulnerable and hold the powerful accountable.** We joined together over the past year to discuss the reality we see across Pennsylvania, and asked ourselves what we believed our government's obligation is to its citizens. We wrote the below platform as a reflection of these conversations, thus*

We the people of Pennsylvania call on our candidates to:

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

What we see:

- ◆ About 14 percent of Pennsylvania's rivers and streams and nearly half of our lakes still do not meet Clean Water Act standards.
- ◆ Pennsylvania produces more heat-trapping gases than 101 countries combined and more heat-trapping gases than 47 states.
- ◆ Due largely to emissions from power plants in Pennsylvania, our rain is among the most acidic in the nation.
- ◆ Our high mercury emissions are partly responsible for a statewide advisory to limit consumption of fish caught in Pennsylvania waters to no more than one meal per week.

What should happen:

- ◆ Protect the Clean Water Act; advocate for clean air standards
- ◆ Put a moratorium on new drilling permits until the state government enacts laws and regulations to make Marcellus gas well drilling safe and environmentally sound.
- ◆ Study the long term effects and risks of hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale.
- ◆ Reform PA's Oil and Gas Act to require mandatory inspections, disclosure of fracking chemicals, extend the presumption of pollution, require adequate bonds and protect municipal zoning and police powers.
- ◆ Advocate for clean and sustainable energy solutions.

PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

What we see:

- ◆ 11% of the population in PA is uninsured.
- ◆ 30% of the uninsured are between the ages of 19 and 29.
- ◆ As of June 2011, 64,798 young adults in Pennsylvania gained insurance coverage as a result of the Affordable Care Act.
- ◆ In the Governor's FY 2012-13 budget, health care for a large share of the GA-eligible individuals will be eliminated.

What should happen:

- ◆ Assure that affordable and accessible health care is provided for all.
- ◆ Support and expand the Affordable Care Act.
- ◆ Make health care reforms that further the common good.

PROVIDE FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

What we see:

- ◆ In June 2011, Governor Corbett signed into law the state budget which cut \$860 million from public schools.
- ◆ Pennsylvania's overall ranking for education is a C+.
- ◆ For a 2nd consecutive year, school districts' are forced to consider cuts to instructional programs and school personnel as they anticipate worsening financial conditions unless funding improves.

What should happen:

- ◆ Make education a priority.
- ◆ Restore funding for education.
- ◆ Fund skill programs, after school programs and summer school.
- ◆ Provide equal education for children who are poor.
- ◆ Ending the disparity in the quality of education across the state.

*Other issues that were raised included providing more security, respecting life at all stages, and maintaining Social Security and Medicare.

STATE PLATFORM

PROVIDE JUST IMMIGRATION REFORM

What we see:

- ◆ Numerous pending bills would negatively affect undocumented people in PA and those who advocate on their behalf. For example, House Bill (HB) 1502 and 1503 would require state contractors and construction employers to verify work authorization of their employees through an online federal database called E-Verify. Senate Bill (SB) 9 would require individuals to produce a government issued ID in order to apply and obtain public benefits.
- ◆ Undocumented immigrants contribute positively to Pennsylvania's economy. According to the Immigration Policy Center, undocumented immigrants in Pennsylvania paid \$135 million in state and local taxes in 2010. If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Pennsylvania, the state would lose \$5.3 billion in economic activity, \$2.3 billion in gross state product and approximately 27,718 jobs.

What should happen:

- ◆ Advocate for comprehensive immigration reform that combats the criminalization of immigrants, provides a realistic path to legalization, fosters family unity and reforms immigrant detention centers.
- ◆ Pass the Pennsylvania DREAM Act (H.B. 1695) that would give undocumented youth, who did not choose their immigration status, the same chance to become part of the educated workforce as their peers.
- ◆ Address the anti-immigrant sentiment in politics and especially in the state of Pennsylvania, especially derogatory rhetoric such as the term "illegal aliens".

PROMOTE POLITICAL INTEGRITY

What we see:

- ◆ Inability of Congress to enact legislation
- ◆ Approval of 112th Congress lowest in history of AP Poll
- ◆ Entrenched partisanship on state and federal levels
- ◆ Partisan bickering, name-calling, divisive and inaccurate rhetoric
- ◆ Unlimited and opaque campaign financing

What should happen:

- ◆ Be honest; don't inflate statistics or bend facts for a partisan agenda
- ◆ Move from individualism and partisanship to collaboration for the common good
- ◆ Maintain civil discourse in debates
- ◆ Regain ability to compromise
- ◆ Limit campaign financing; repeal Citizens United

PROMOTE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

What we see:

- ◆ Currently, 7.4% of Pennsylvanians are unemployed.
- ◆ Poverty in Pennsylvania rose by a statistically significant margin, going from 11.6% in 2007 to 13.4% in 2010.
- ◆ The Economy Policy Institute found that Pennsylvania would lose 37,200 jobs in 2014 if the House-passed budget \$544 billion in Medicaid cuts were enacted.
- ◆ Pennsylvania will spend \$2.4 billion on business tax breaks in 2013 according to the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center.

What should happen:

- ◆ Enact just tax policies that ensure everyone pays their fair share.
- ◆ End tax breaks for the wealthy on the backs of poor and middle income Pennsylvania families.
- ◆ Pass legislation that creates jobs, provides 21st century skill training for unemployed workers
- ◆ Protect programs providing services to the poor and vulnerable families.

We the people must continue to work together—as government, business, communities and individuals- to create a nation and world rooted in justice. We must speak, act, insist, demand and ensure that the common good is at the heart of all decisions and actions. These times call for renewed engagement across our differences. Political engagement is not just our right, but our responsibility.

ELECTION 2012



CATHOLICS VOTE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

TAKE ACTION

This year, Catholic voters face critical choices as we help decide who will lead our nation, states and communities. The stakes have never been higher. The 2012 election comes at a time when the U.S. faces the highest poverty rates in decades, when the wealth gap has reached historic levels and income disparities are high, and when government officials face stark choices about who will benefit and who will suffer as a result of the decisions they make.

Will those decisions be based on the common good* or will they serve only to enrich the already super-wealthy and divide us further? Will they foster economic justice and peace? Or will our nation become mired in injustice and division?

As faithful citizens guided by the Gospel command to protect those who are most vulnerable and hold accountable those with power, we know we cannot afford to “sit this one out.”

Signature	Print Name	Address	Email

Return signed petition to NETWORK—25 E St. NW—Washington, DC 20001 or FAX 202-347-9864.
You may also sign the petition online at www.CommonGood2012.org