



ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTA FE

The Catholic Center

May 2016

Policy and Guidelines Pertaining to Prohibited Campaign Activities in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe

To ensure that the Church does not become entangled in politics and for the Archdiocese to continue to qualify for tax exempt status, it must not engage in prohibited political campaign activity.

Violation of these prohibitions can have serious tax consequences, including loss of deductibility of contributions to the parish as well as loss of tax exempt status for the Archdiocese.

Unfortunately, the line between activities that are permitted and activities that are prohibited is often unclear. The restrictions are based on detailed guidelines issued by the General Counsel of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. They can be found on the web at www.usccb.org.

One specific activity that merits particular attention is the preparation and distribution of candidate questionnaire responses, candidates voting records and similar "voter education" materials. Due to the technicality of the regulations, *do not get involved in this unless the material specifically comes from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops, or the Catholic Center.*

- Permission should not be given for voter education materials, leaflets or other campaign literature of a candidate or interest group promoting a particular candidate to be distributed on Church property or distributed on behalf of the Church. We are not responsible if people without permission distribute materials on cars or our property.
- Parishes and Catholic organizations should not make statements, either oral or written, supporting or opposing any candidate for elective public office, any slate of candidates, a political party or political action committee (PAC). This would include statements made in a homily, a parish bulletin, or distribution of filled-in sample ballots.
- In addition, parishes and Catholic organizations should avoid statements that indirectly support or oppose a particular candidate, e.g., labeling a candidate as pro-life or anti-family, using plus (+) or minus (-) or similar signs that indicate candidates' agreement (or lack thereof) with the Church's position on issues.
- An individual candidate for office should not be invited or permitted to speak at Church events. Candidate forums may, however, be sponsored by a parish provided all candidates running for the same office are invited to participate.
- Parishes and Catholic organizations may not provide, or solicit, financial support to or for any candidate, PAC, or political party. Likewise, they may not provide or solicit in-kind support, such as free use of staff or facilities. Nor should we make available any mailing lists to candidates, parties or PACs.
- No political ads promoting or opposing a candidate are to be accepted in parish bulletins.

None of this should be taken to inhibit priests or deacons from preaching on the moral and social issues espoused by the Church and our Bishops. In fact, the 2008 statement of the Bishops on political responsibility (reaffirmed for 2012 with a new introductory note and revised in 2015), *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, encourages us to do so. Please refer to <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/> for the document and introductory note, bulletin inserts on civil dialogue and conscience formation, homily suggestions, prayer suggestions, videos, and do's and don'ts.

Revised and approved 5/2016