

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMPARISON



Compiled by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference for the 2024 General Election

In keeping with its mission, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference aims to educate and inform Catholics about a wide range of issues. The information compiled here has been gathered from policies, public statements, official and campaign websites, and other resources, as of September 6th, to help voters form their consciences before voting in November. The issues that appear here do not represent a complete list of issues that may be of importance to Catholics. The PCC neither supports nor opposes any candidate for public office.

“Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access those things required for human decency – food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life.”
– Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, No. 49, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2023



Vice President KAMALA HARRIS



Former President DONALD TRUMP

ABORTION

In a 2023 interview, Harris said, “We need to put into law the protections of Roe v. Wade. And that is about going back to where we were before the Dobbs decision.” Harris posted on social media in July 2024, “We who believe in reproductive freedom will stop Donald Trump’s extreme abortion bans—because we trust women to make decisions about their bodies.” In her address at the Democratic National Convention Harris said, “[W]hen Congress passes a bill to restore reproductive freedom, as president of the United States, I will proudly sign it into law.”

As president, Trump nominated three Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn Roe v. Wade. In an April 2024 video, Trump said, “My view is now that we have abortion where everyone wanted it from a legal standpoint, the states will determine by vote or legislation... Many states will be different.” He also said he would not sign a national abortion ban. In August 2024, Trump said he is voting no on Florida’s ballot Amendment 4, which would legalize abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy with no protections for the unborn baby.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Harris’ 2020 plan included legalizing marijuana, abolishing mandatory minimum sentences, ending the death penalty and solitary confinement, stopping private prisons, getting rid of cash bail, and leveraging the president’s clemency powers to reduce the number of people in federal prison. As a Senator, Harris introduced a bail reform bill with Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) in 2017 and voted in favor of the First Step Act in 2018.

In 2018, Trump signed into law the First Step Act, which, according to a Federal Bureau of Prisons overview, “was the culmination of a bi-partisan effort to improve criminal justice outcomes, as well as to reduce the size of the federal prison population while also creating mechanisms to maintain public safety.” During an Aug. 2020 White House briefing, Trump stated, “I’ll appoint more tough-on-crime prosecutors. ... When you enforce the law, order follows. And we need order.”

DEATH PENALTY

During her 2020 Presidential bid, Harris stated she would seek to end the death penalty. In 2024, the Democratic National Committee dropped the call for an end to the death penalty from its platform.

The Trump administration presided over 13 federal executions. Trump has said that he supports expanding the death penalty to include convicted drug smugglers/traffickers.

EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

No statements on Harris’ position on educational choice were found. The 2024 Democratic Party Platform states, “We oppose the use of private-school vouchers, tuition tax credits, opportunity scholarships, and other schemes that divert taxpayer-funded resources away from public education.”

Trump’s website states, “Republicans believe families should be empowered to choose the best Education for their children. We support Universal School Choice in every State in America. We will expand 529 Education Savings Accounts and support Homeschooling Families equally.”

ENVIRONMENT

At a UN climate summit in 2023, Vice President Harris announced “a new \$3 billion pledge to the Green Climate Fund, which helps developing countries invest in resilience, clean energy, and nature-based solutions.”

In 2019, the Trump Administration began the process of withdrawing from the Paris agreement on climate change, an international accord to reduce global green-house gas emissions.

GENDER ISSUES

In social media posts in June/July of 2023, Harris called on Congress to pass the Equality Act, which would add the new terms “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to the definition of “sex” in federal civil rights laws, and would exempt itself from the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. As a U.S. Senator, Harris also cosponsored the Equality Act in 2017.

In a Jan. 2023 video, Trump said, “I will ask Congress to pass a bill establishing that the only genders recognized by the United States government are male and female and they are assigned at birth. The bill will also make clear that Title IX prohibits men from participating in women’s sports and we will protect the rights of parents from being forced to allow their minor child to assume a gender which is new and an identity without the parents’ consent.”

HEALTH CARE

At a March 2024 event, Harris said the Biden-Harris Administration “strengthened the Affordable Care Act so that, today, more Americans have healthcare coverage than ever before.”

In a Nov. 2023 social media post, Trump said, “Getting much better Healthcare than Obamacare for the American people will be a priority... It is not a matter of cost, it is a matter of HEALTH. America will have one of the best Healthcare Plans anywhere in the world. Right now it has one of the WORST!”

1/2

Four Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*
The central and enduring themes of Catholic social teaching are organized under four principles that provide a moral framework for decisions in public life.

The Dignity of the Human Person



Human life is sacred. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable. In our society, the gravest example is abortion. Euthanasia, assisted suicide, human cloning, in vitro fertilization and the destruction of embryos for research are others. Protecting the dignity of life also includes overcoming poverty, ending use of the death penalty, and opposing racism, torture, unjust war, human trafficking and all activities that contribute to the “throwaway culture” identified by Pope Francis.

The Common Good



The common good is achieved when social conditions allow people to reach their fulfillment more fully and easily. It upholds the fundamental right to life, which makes all other rights possible. It asserts the right to food, shelter, education, employment, health care, housing, freedom of religion and conscience, and family life. It requires an economy that serves people, not the other way around. It calls on employers to uphold the dignity and rights of workers by offering productive work, decent and just wages, adequate security in their old age, the choice of whether to organize and join unions, and the opportunity for legal status for immigrant workers. Workers should contribute a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay, treat employers and co-workers with respect, and contribute to the common good. This principle requires we protect and care for all of God’s creation, especially the most vulnerable among us, and the earth, our common home.

Subsidiarity



The human person is social. The family is the fundamental building block of society, based on marriage between a man and a woman, a sanctuary for creation and nurturing of children. Policies and programs should defend, strengthen and respect this foundational unit and uphold parents’ rights and responsibilities to care for and educate their children. Further, every person and association has a right and duty to actively shape society and promote the well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Subsidiarity means that society’s larger institutions should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local ones. These larger institutions are obliged, however, to protect human dignity and meet human needs when smaller institutions cannot adequately do so.

Solidarity



We are one human family, despite our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences, called to love our neighbor as ourselves. We must work to eradicate poverty, disease and racism, and welcome immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are seeking employment, safety, education and a better life for their families. Solidarity requires preferential concern for the poor. A basic moral test of any society is how it treats those who are most vulnerable. This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all who are marginalized—unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, victims of injustice and oppression, and immigrants.

*Adapted from Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, Nos. 44-56, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015.