

Diocese of Manchester Public Policy Directives

The following directives are intended to advance the principles of Catholic teaching which mandate that the Church and its ministers not engage in partisan politics. These directives also are provided to assist the parishes, schools, and other organizations of the Diocese of Manchester that are exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) in distinguishing activities that are permitted during election campaigns from activities that are prohibited. *Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code contains a prohibition, which has been interpreted as being absolute, against participation or intervention in a political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate as a condition of maintaining federal income tax exemption.*

Permitted The following activities are *allowed*:

- Sharing Catholic Social Teaching in a consistent and integral way and applying that teaching to legislation and public issues.
- Expressing (verbally or in writing) church positions on issues and the moral and human dimensions of public issues, as long as these are not tied to opinions of specific candidates in such a way as to indicate obvious or implied support of (or opposition to) a candidate or party.
- Permitting the use of church facilities as a town or city voting place.
- Distributing “voter guides”, **if** they have been approved for use by the Bishop or Chancellor, or are materials produced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (“USCCB”).
- Distributing unbiased candidate questionnaires covering issues of human life, justice, and peace **if** they have been reviewed and approved by the Bishop or Chancellor; or
- Conducting a non-partisan voter registration drive on church property.

Not Permitted The following activities are *prohibited*:

- Endorsing or opposing a particular candidate or political party (or even merely appearing to do so).
- Posting political advertisements, signs, posters or partisan campaign literature on church property.
- Political leafleting on church-owned property, including church-owned parking lots.
- Arranging for people or groups to work for a political party or a candidate for public office.
- Allowing political parties or candidates to use diocesan facilities for any reason, whether for rent or at no charge.
- Providing or soliciting financial support for any candidate.
- Inviting only select candidates to address a church-sponsored group.
- Conducting voter registration slanted toward a particular party, or distributing a biased candidate survey.
- Distributing or publicizing any voter guides, pamphlets, or materials that have not been approved by the Bishop, the Chancellor, or the USCCB; or providing or publicizing any advocacy or voting-related education or training activities that are presented by an organization other than the RCBM, unless otherwise approved by the Bishop or Chancellor.
- Inviting or allowing anyone not approved by the Bishop or Chancellor to speak in-person or remotely about elections, voting, or public advocacy of any kind.

If you have any questions about these Directives, please contact Bob Dunn, Director of Public Policy, at rdunn@rcbm.org or (603) 663-0134.