

Biden vs. Ryan: Catholic Doctrine and Stances of the Candidates

Few outcomes are certain this election save one: the Vice President will be Catholic. For the first time in American history, both Presidential candidates have picked Catholic running mates, While Joe Biden and Paul Ryan both lay claim to the same faith, they differ substantially on many issues of policy and conscience. The work before all voters should be picking candidates in the light of a “fully formed conscience,” a task that has always been a challenge. For Catholics, the Church’s guidance is principled, not partisan, and rightly understands various political opinions can be compatible with faith and the natural moral law:

From the specificity of the task at hand and the variety of circumstances, a plurality of morally acceptable policies and solutions arises. It is not the Church’s task to set forth specific political solutions – and even less to propose a single solution as the acceptable one – to temporal questions that God has left to the free and responsible judgment of each person. It is, however, the Church’s right and duty to provide a moral judgment on temporal matters when this is required by faith or the moral law.¹

Catholics must weigh prudential judgments when applying moral principles to specific policy choices in areas such as the war in Iraq, housing, health care, immigration and others. It is not uncommon for two people of faith to agree on principles while disagreeing on their implementation. That being said, in other areas, specifically faith and morals, the Church teaches:

There are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. Such actions are so deeply flawed that they are always opposed to the authentic good of persons. These are called “intrinsically evil” actions. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia. In our nation, “abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others”²

The Catholic Church instructs that all Catholics should participate as “faithful citizens” in the public square, especially when it comes to voting, a right which we must approach in accordance with the teachings of the Church foremost in our minds. In more layman’s terms, in a joint pastoral letter sent to the faithful in the state of Kansas prior to the 2008 elections, Archbishop Joseph Naumann and Bishop Robert Finn addressed many of the same issues that

¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note: The Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html (accessed September 21, 2012).

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf> (accessed September 21, 2012).

we face today placing them into one of two categories³. Issues such as the environment, immigration, health care and tending to the poor were classified as “Prudential Judgments.”

While the above issues, as well as many others, have important moral dimensions, Catholics may and do disagree about the most effective public policies for responding to them. How these issues are best addressed and what particular candidates are best equipped to address them requires prudential judgments – defined as circumstances in which people can ethically reach different conclusions. Catholics have an obligation to study, reflect and pray over the relative merits of the different policy approaches proposed by candidates. Catholics have a special responsibility to be well informed regarding the guidance given by the Church pertaining to the moral dimensions of these matters. In the end, Catholics in good conscience can disagree in their judgments about many aspects of the best policies and the most effective candidates.

Certain issues that we face, though, are far less gray. These issues are described as “Intrinsic Evils.”

There are, however, some issues that always involve doing evil, such as legalized abortion, the promotion of same-sex unions and ‘marriages,’ repression of religious liberty, as well as public policies permitting euthanasia, racial discrimination or destructive human embryonic stem cell research. A properly formed conscience must give such issues priority even over other matters with important moral dimensions. To vote for a candidate who supports these intrinsic evils because he or she supports these evils is to participate in a grave moral evil. It can never be justified.

For the purposes of this guide, we have used these parameters in dividing the issues where we could find responses from candidates Joe Biden or Paul Ryan. To see which candidate, Vice President Biden or Representative Ryan, better exemplifies Catholic teaching, one needs to see their public actions and statements in light of the Church’s authoritative teachings and guidance of Her Bishops here in the United States. There’s no substitute for reading these texts in their entirety, and quotes here attempt to strike a balance between being substantial enough to properly convey the author’s intent without becoming tediously prolonged.

“Democracy must be based on the true and solid foundation of non-negotiable ethical principles, which are the underpinning of life in society.”⁴

³ “Our Moral Responsibilities as Catholic Citizens,” September 12, 2008. http://www.ewtn.com/vote/2008/KC_election08.pdf (accessed September 27, 2012).

⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note: The Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html (accessed September 21, 2012).

Intrinsic Evils

Life

[The Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. (2270)

*The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a **constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation**:*

“The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin.”(2273)

[Blessed John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, 1988](#)

“Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights -- for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture -- is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination”

[Archbishop Charles Chaput, National Catholic Register](#)

“I can only speak in terms of my own personal views. I certainly can't vote for somebody who's either pro-choice or pro-abortion.”

[U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops \(USCCB\), Faithful Citizenship](#)

As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support. Yet a candidate's position on a single issue that involves an intrinsic evil, such as support for legal abortion or the promotion of racism, may legitimately lead a voter to disqualify a candidate from receiving support. (42)

[Blessed John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae](#)

“The legal toleration of abortion or of euthanasia can in no way claim to be based on respect for the conscience of others, precisely because society has the right and the duty to protect itself against the abuses which can occur in the name of conscience and under the pretext of freedom.” (71)

Joe Biden

- Believes he is personally prepared to accept that life begins at conception but tolerates abortion out of respect for the consciences of others. ([Source: Meet the Press 2007](#))

- Defends Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, including mandate that employers cover sterilization, contraception and abortion inducing drugs. ([Source: NY Times](#))
- Understands and does not “second guess” China’s one child policy of mass sterilization and forced abortion. (Source: [Appearance at Sichuan University in Chengdu, China](#))
- Voted against parental notification of minors who get out-of-state abortions ([S.403, Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, Roll Call 06-216, July 25, 2006](#))
- Voted against the Unborn Victims of Violence Act which makes it a criminal offense to harm or kill a fetus during the commission of a violent crime. ([S.1019/H.R. 1997, Unborn Victims of Violence Act, Roll Call 04-63, March 25, 2004](#))
- Voted against defining the unborn child as eligible for SCHIP: Amends the definition of the term “targeted low-income child” to provide that such term includes the period from conception to birth, for eligibility for child health assistance. ([S.Amdt. to S.ConRes.70, Senator Allard Amendment, Roll Call 08-S81, March 14, 2008](#))
- Voted for the Partial Birth Abortion Ban. ([S. 1692, Partial Birth Abortion Ban, Roll Call 99-340, October 21, 1999 \[He did not vote on the one that became law in the 108th Congress.\]](#))
- Voted for increasing funding to abortion giant Planned Parenthood and similar organizations by \$100 million. ([S.Amdt. 244 to S.Con.Res 18, Appropriation to expand access to preventive health care services, Roll Call 05-75, March 17, 2005.](#))
- Voted for taxpayer funding of abortions on military bases ([S. 2549, Roll Call 00-134, June 20, 2000.](#))

Paul Ryan

- “I believe that pro-life taxpayers should not be forced to fund abortions. On January 23, 2009, three days after taking the oath of office and one day after the 36th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, President Obama cleared the way for your tax dollars to fund overseas abortions. In one of his first executive orders, Obama reversed a long-standing policy (the so-called ‘Mexico City policy’) that prohibited U.S. tax dollars from funding abortions overseas.

I believe that U.S. foreign aid should be used to promote and protect life – not finance abortion. In addition to the flagrant disrespect for the rights of the unborn, this decision also offends the deeply held beliefs of millions of pro-life taxpayers. While ensuring that provisions that promote abortions are excluded, I will continue to support efforts to efficiently and effectively allocate resources to help confront the grave public health emergencies that grip many parts of our world.” ([Op-ed in Wisconsin Journal Times](#), February 04, 2009.)

- “I cannot believe any official or citizen can still defend the notion that an unborn human being has no rights that an older person is bound to respect,” Ryan wrote in a piece on personhood for the Heritage Foundation in 2010. “How long can we sustain our commitment to freedom if we continue to deny the very foundation of freedom — life — for the most vulnerable human beings?” ([Paul Ryan on Personhood](#))
- Parental notification: “Parents have a responsibility to protect their children’s health and well-being, and this legislation helps them do this. It will help them prevent young girls from being pressured into crossing state lines for an abortion that they conceal from their parents – something we should all agree is dangerous and harmful.” ([Press Release following House vote on S. 403, the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act](#). Rep. Ryan supported the legislation.)
- Co-sponsored the 2011 Sanctity of Human Life Act stating that the “life of each human being begins with fertilization, cloning, or its functional equivalent” and empowers states to “protect the lives of all human beings residing in its respective jurisdictions.” ([Source: Govtrack.us](#))
- Co-sponsored the 2011 No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act, a bill banning federal funding for abortion. ([Source: Thomas.gov](#))

Destructive Embryonic Stem Cell Research/Human Cloning

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([USCCB](#)), *Faithful Citizenship*
Similarly, direct threats to the sanctity and dignity of human life, such as human cloning and destructive research on human embryos, are also intrinsically evil. These must always be opposed. (23)

Joe Biden

- Biden was one of 58 senators who signed a letter to President Bush in 2004 asking him to expand federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research to new lines—that is, to additional cell lines taken by the destruction of additional human embryos. When the President did not expand funding, Biden joined 62 other senators in voting on April 11, 2007, to support funding for additional lines, which would have meant the destruction of more embryos. President Bush vetoed the bill. [Joe Biden Supports Embryonic Stem Cell Research](#)
- Voted for increasing funding of destructive human embryonic stem cell experimentation ([S.5/H.R. 3, Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, Roll Call 07-127, April 11, 2007.](#))
- Voted against banning human cloning: ([Motion to proceed for S.1601, Roll Call 98-10, February 11, 1998.](#))

Paul Ryan

- “We should respect life in its earliest, most vulnerable stages at the same time that we pursue scientific advances to cure debilitating diseases. This is why it’s especially important that we find ways to ethically tap the potential of non-embryonic stem cells from adult tissues and umbilical cord blood. Our federal government does not have to choose between advancing new therapies and adhering to strict ethical standards. We can achieve both and uphold the trust of American taxpayers, including those who believe, as I do, that the destruction of human embryos for research is wrong.” ([Paul Ryan, Statement on Stem Cell Votes](#))
- Voted against increased federal funding for the destruction of human embryos for experimentation. (SOURCE: [FRC Action Scorecard for the 110th Congress](#))
- Voted against sanctioning the creation of cloned human embryos for destructive research. (SOURCE: [FRC Action Scorecard for the 110th Congress](#))

Marriage

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([USCCB](#)), [Faithful Citizenship](#)

The human person is not only sacred but also social. Full human development takes place in relationship with others. The family—based on marriage between a man and a woman—is the first and fundamental unit of society and is a sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children. It should be defended and strengthened, not redefined or undermined by permitting same-sex unions or other distortions of marriage. Respect for the family should be reflected in every policy and program. It is important to uphold parents' rights and responsibilities to care for their children, including the right to choose their children's education. (46)

[Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note 2002](#)

The family needs to be safeguarded and promoted, based on monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, and protected in its unity and stability in the face of modern laws on divorce: in no way can other forms of cohabitation be placed on the same level as marriage, nor can they receive legal recognition as such. (4)

[Bishop Salvatore Cordileone, National Catholic Register 2012](#)

“People need to understand that if they want to live by the principle that marriage is between a man and a woman, they are likely to be regarded as bigots and treated by society and the law as such.

“Out of justice for children, we need to do the best that we can to help them grow up with their mother and their father, married to each other in a stable relationship.

“If we don’t save marriage, things will get very dark. The idea that you can change the definition of marriage is a lie. If our society accepts this lie, it will fall.”

[Pope Benedict XVI Address to New Ambassador of Hungary to the Holy See 2010](#)

The Church cannot approve legislative initiatives that imply the support of alternative models of life for couples and the family. They contribute to the weakening of the principles of natural law and thus to the relativization of all legislation, as well as of the awareness of values in society.

Joe Biden

- “I am absolutely comfortable with the fact that men marrying men, women marrying women and heterosexual men and women marrying one another are entitled to the same exact rights, all the civil rights, all the civil liberties,” ([Joe Biden, Meet the Press 2012](#))
- Voted against the Marriage Protection Amendment: ([S.J.Res. 1, Roll Call 06-163, June 7, 2006.](#))
- Voted for the Defense of Marriage Act: ([H.R. 3396, Roll Call 96-280, September 10, 1996.](#))

Paul Ryan

- “Now, there are key issues, intrinsic issues, life and marriage and things like this that are really non-negotiable and the Church is very clear on that.” ([Paul Ryan, The Brody File 2012](#))
- “I believe fundamentally that marriage is between a man and a woman. Although I support the constitutional amendment to protect marriage, that process cannot continue at this time given the failed attempt by the U.S. Senate to advance the amendment. Meanwhile, states could be forced to accept same-sex marriages because of a few judges in Massachusetts. This legislation protects each state’s right to protect marriage.”

“Marriage is not simply a legal arrangement between individuals. The institution of marriage is an integral part of our civil society and its significance goes well beyond eligibility for benefits and similar considerations. Its future should not be left to a few overreaching judges or local officials to decide,” Ryan said. “That’s why I support this effort to amend our Constitution to protect marriage.” ([Paul Ryan, Press Statement 2004](#))

ADOPTION

[Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons](#)

by then Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI

Allowing children to be adopted by persons in such [homosexual] unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development.

Joe Biden

- According to the homosexual advocacy organization, the Human Rights Campaign 2008 Presidential Questionnaire, “Senator Biden believes that committed adults who

are adopting should not be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.” (SOURCE: [Human Rights Campaign](#))

- The Obama/Biden Administration supports H.R. 1681, a bill introduced by Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) on May 3, 2011. It would “prohibit discrimination in adoption or foster care placements based on the sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status of any prospective adoptive or foster parent, or the sexual orientation or gender identity of the child involved.” (SOURCE: [Huffington Post](#))

Many adoption placements are carried out by private, faith-based social service agencies. Some of these decline in principle to place children for adoption with homosexuals, same-sex couples, or any unmarried couples, because homosexual relationships or sexual relationships outside of marriage are in violation of their religious and moral teachings.

Under Rep. Stark’s bill, such faith-based adoption agencies would be forced to either compromise their beliefs or go out of business altogether. The legalization of same-sex “marriage” in Massachusetts in 2004 and in the District of Columbia in 2010 forced Catholic Charities to terminate their adoption work in those jurisdictions. The same thing happened in Illinois in 2011 in the wake of that state’s adoption of “civil unions,” which provide all of the legal rights and benefits of marriage available under state law to same-sex couples.

Paul Ryan

- In the 106th Congress, Congressman Ryan voted for an amendment that prohibits the use of taxpayer funds from being used to allow joint adoptions by persons who are unrelated by either blood or marriage. ([H.R. 2587, Roll Call 346, July, 29, 1999](#))

Religious Liberty

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([USCCB](#)), [Faithful Citizenship](#)

The USCCB actively supports conscience clauses, opposes any effort to undermine the ability of faith-based groups to preserve their identity and integrity as partners with government, and is committed to protecting long-standing civil rights and other protections for both religious groups and the people they serve. Government bodies should not require Catholic institutions to compromise their moral convictions to participate in government health or human service programs. (78)

[Bishop William Lori, National Catholic Register 2011](#)

Religious liberty is the preeminent social justice issue. One can characterize religious freedom as an “inward” issue only if one accepts the very view our conference is struggling against — that religion should be confined to the sacristy.

When we speak about religious freedom as the first of the freedoms, it’s not to aggrandize the Church but to uphold the first line of defense for the dignity of the human person.

[Cardinal Timothy Dolan, USA Today Editorial 2012](#)

There are many reasons to decry this HHS mandate. But perhaps the most important reason is that it is simply un-American.

Joe Biden

- “The conscience clause is being honored in its literal sense. What is happening now is that we have been able to provide what was hard to set up -- it got screwed up in the first iteration — is that any hospital, no matter where it is, no matter who runs it, profit or non profit, religious based or otherwise, has to provide insurance to their employees like everybody else does.” ([Joe Biden at Iowa State University on the Healthcare Law](#))
- On “Face the Nation,” Vice President Joe Biden told host Bob Schieffer that the recent debate over contraception coverage is “remarkable,” and that opponents to contraception coverage are “totally out of touch with reality.” “I just find it remarkable that the argument is even taking place,” Biden said. “I think it's totally out of touch with reality and totally out of touch with the Independents.” The Vice President also said it violates “the right of women to decide for themselves whether or not they want to use contraception.” ([Joe Biden on Face the Nation](#))

Paul Ryan

- “While I am a pro-life Catholic, I believe this mandate transcends the issue of personal religious beliefs about contraception, sterilization and abortion. The Obama Administration failed to recognize this mandate is in violation of our First Amendment right of religious freedom. For this reason, I am a cosponsor of H.R. 1179, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. This piece of legislation would amend the President's health care law to permit a health plan to decline coverage of specific items and services that infringe upon one's religious beliefs.” ([Paul Ryan, Issue Statement](#))
- “This is a time where people of all faiths – especially Catholics – have to stand up and speak for our rights,” he said. “And if we do, we will rekindle civil society.” ([Paul Ryan, Catholic News Agency 2012](#))
- “The President’s policy continues to contradict the core principles of our nation. His decision today still disrespects the Constitution by treating our rights as revocable privileges from our government, instead of inalienable gifts from our creator. The President did not compromise -- he doubled down.” ([Paul Ryan, Press Statement 2012](#))

Torture

[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

In times past, cruel practices were commonly used by legitimate governments to maintain law and order, often without protest from the Pastors of the Church, who themselves adopted in their own tribunals the prescriptions of Roman law concerning torture. Regrettable as these facts are, the Church always taught the duty of clemency and mercy. She forbade clerics to shed blood. In recent times it has become evident that these cruel practices were neither necessary for public order, nor in conformity with the legitimate rights of the human person.

On the contrary, these practices led to ones even more degrading. It is necessary to work for their abolition. We must pray for the victims and their tormentors.(2298)

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([USCCB](#)), *Faithful Citizenship*
Other direct assaults on innocent human life and violations of human dignity, such as genocide, torture, racism, and the targeting of noncombatants in acts of terror or war, can never be justified. (23)

Joe Biden

- Q: “Can you, Mr. Vice President, envision a time where waterboarding can ever be used on anyone?”
Biden: ”No, no, it's not effective” ([Joe Biden, Face the Nation](#))
- “At the same time, the President shut down secret prisons overseas, banned torture, and in doing so, demonstrated that we don’t have to choose between protecting our country and living our values; and, as a consequence of those decisions, enhanced the security of our own soldiers abroad and the power of our persuasion around the world.” ([Joe Biden, Whitehouse Statement 2012](#))
- Joe Biden sponsored the National Security with Justice Act, a law that would have reformed policies on the apprehension, detention, treatment and transfer of detainees. The legislation unambiguously prohibits any United States personnel, including members of our intelligence services, from torturing and mistreating detainees. ([Source: Govtrack.us](#))

Paul Ryan

No major action on torture. He voted for the Military Commission Act of 2006 that made it harder to bring charges against federal agents for misconduct, including torture, and voted for National Defense Authorization Act of 2011, [signed by President Obama](#) that granted the Government the authority to arrest and detain indefinitely U.S. citizens accused of terrorism. ([SOURCE](#))

Prudential Judgements

Poverty (Tax Policy, Charitable Giving)

[Pope Benedict address to Italian volunteer associations 2012](#)

“Solidarity is first and foremost a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone, and it cannot therefore be merely delegated to the State”

[Bishop Robert Morlino, Catholic Herald 2012](#)

However, a conscience well-formed according to reason or the Catholic faith must also make choices where intrinsic evil is not involved. How best to care for the poor is probably the finest current example of this, though another would be how best to create jobs at a time when so many are suffering from the ravages of unemployment. In matters such as these, where intrinsic evil is not involved, the rational principles of solidarity and subsidiarity come into play.

Joe Biden

- In 2011, the Bidens reported adjusted gross income of \$379,035. The Bidens paid \$87,900 in total federal tax for 2011. They paid \$13,843 in Delaware income tax and \$3,614 in Virginia income tax. The Bidens contributed \$5,540 to charity in 2011. This is less than **1.5 percent** of their adjusted gross income to charity. By comparison, the Obamas gave nearly 22 percent of their adjusted gross income in 2011. (SOURCE: [White House website](#)) During the 2008 campaign, [USA Today](#) reported that “Democratic vice presidential candidate Joe Biden and his wife gave an average of \$369 a year to charity during the past decade, his tax records show.”
- The Obama/Biden Administration budget for 2013 eliminates the charitable tax credit. The *Washington Times* reports: “Roberton Williams, senior fellow at the Tax Policy Center, said it’s impossible to calculate the exact effects of all the tax changes, but said the overall result is clear - less philanthropic giving. ‘This will lead people to give less to charities if they behave the way they’ve behaved in the past,’ he said. ‘We’ve already seen a drop in giving as a result of the economic collapse. On top of that, this will just reduce the amount of giving.’ Asked about that, Office of Management and Budget Director Peter Orszag said, “Mr. Obama took care of that by giving charities government money to make up part of the difference.” (SOURCE: [Washington Times](#))

Paul Ryan

- In 2011 the Ryan family gave twice as much to private charities as the Bidens. Ryan reported \$2,600 in charitable donations in 2010 and nearly \$13,000 in donations in 2011. The Romney campaign said the Ryans' charitable contributions have gone to groups such as the Boy Scouts of America, Junior Achievement, Women & Children's Horizons, which helps victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and Care Net, which counsels women who have unplanned pregnancies to seek alternatives to abortion. The Romneys gave 29.4 percent of their income to charity in 2011, donating \$4,020,772. (Source: [USA Today/Politico](#))

- “One in six Americans are in poverty today,” Congressman Ryan told Raymond Arroyo on EWTN’s *The World Over* in an interview Thursday, “yet we’ve thrown so much money at these programs. Why don’t we fix these programs so that they actually work to break the cycle of poverty? If we keep growing government in debt,” Ryan continued, “we will crowd out the civil society — those charities, those churches, those institutions in our local communities that do the most to actually have a human touch to help people in need. That’s what we want to empower. That’s what we want to improve on.” ([Interview with Raymond Arroyo on EWTN’s *The World Over*](#).)

Death Penalty

[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.

If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.

Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm - without definitely taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself - the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity “are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.”(2267)

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([USCCB](#)), [Faithful Citizenship](#)

Racism and other unjust discrimination, the use of the death penalty, resorting to unjust war, the use of torture, war crimes, the failure to respond to those who are suffering from hunger or a lack of health care, or an unjust immigration policy are all serious moral issues that challenge our consciences and require us to act.

These are not optional concerns which can be dismissed. Catholics are urged to seriously consider Church teaching on these issues. Although choices about how best to respond to these and other compelling threats to human life and dignity are matters for principled debate and decision, this does not make them optional concerns or permit Catholics to dismiss or ignore Church teaching on these important issues. (29)

[Blessed John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*](#)

It is clear that, for these purposes to be achieved, the nature and extent of the punishment must be carefully evaluated and decided upon, and ought not go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. Today, however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.(56)

Joe Biden

- Supports capital punishment and holds the distinction of being the author of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (often referred to as the "Biden crime bill"), which expanded the federal death penalty to include drug trafficking, a nonviolent offense. ([Source: Thomas.loc.gov](#))
- Joe Biden, Nov. 17, 1993, voted against [S Amdt 1204 Replacing the Death Penalty with Life Imprisonment](#)
- Nov. 8, 1993 voted against [S Amdt 1132 Prohibiting the Death Penalty for Minors](#)

Paul Ryan

Co-sponsored three bills that included a death penalty provision. ([Source: votesmart.org](#))

- [H.R.4127 \(2009\)](#): To provide that alien unprivileged enemy belligerents may only be tried by military commissions if tried for alleged conduct for which a term of incarceration or the death penalty may be sought.
- [H.R.3132 \(2005-2006\)](#): Prevention and Deterrence of Crimes Against Children Act: Requires a person convicted of a federal crime of violence against an individual under age 18 to be sentenced to death or life imprisonment if the crime results in the death of that person.
- [H.R.1997 \(2003\)](#) Unborn Victims of Violence Act: Allows charging a separate offense against unborn children, but prohibits imposition of the death penalty for such an offense.

Child Tax Credit

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([USCCB](#)), [Faithful Citizenship](#)
Welfare policy should reduce poverty and dependency, strengthen family life, and help families leave poverty through work, training, and assistance with child care, health care, housing, and transportation. It should also provide a safety net for those who cannot work. Improving the Earned Income Tax Credit and child tax credits available as refunds to families in greatest need will help lift low-income families out of poverty.(77)

[USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Letter to House Ways and Means Committee 2012](#)

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* clearly states the importance of ensuring that workers make a family wage, “a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently. . . . There can be several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality. Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members. . .” (no. 250).

The Child Tax Credit is a clear example of this. We must protect those programs that help low-income workers escape poverty and raise their children in dignity.

Joe Biden

Expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit: The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit provides too little relief to families that struggle to afford child care expenses. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will reform the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit by making it refundable and allowing low-income families to receive up to a 50 percent credit for their child care expenses. ([Joe Biden, President's Family Agenda](#))

Paul Ryan

- Paul Ryan's budget proposal calls for eliminating a host of tax deductions and credits in order to produce a far simpler income tax code with just two rates for individuals: 10 percent and 25 percent. But Ryan doesn't specify which popular tax breaks — like the child tax credit or the mortgage interest deduction — might be spared. ([Source: CNBC](#))
- Paul Ryan has supported the Child Tax Credit in the past. He voted for the Child Tax Credit bill in 2003, which provided a five year extension on the \$1,000/per child tax credit (Sec. 101). The bill ensured that tax relief for taxpayers in the 10% bracket, as well as the increase in the Child Tax Credit provided in the 2003 tax cut, would not expire before 2010. It also ensured that tax relief for married couples provided in the 2003 tax cut would not expire before 2008. ([Source: votesmart.org](#))

Immigration Reform

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB, Faithful Citizenship](#)

"The Gospel mandate to 'welcome the stranger' requires Catholics to care for and stand with immigrants, both documented and undocumented, including immigrant children. Comprehensive reform is urgently necessary to fix a broken immigration system and should include a temporary work program with worker protections and a path to permanent residency; family reunification policies; a broad and fair legalization program; access to legal protections, including due process and essential public programs; refuge for those fleeing persecution and exploitation; and policies to address the root causes of migration. The right and responsibility of nations to control their borders and to maintain the rule of law should be recognized."(83)

[Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Letter to House on Immigration](#)

"Of particular concern to us and our brother bishops is the impact our broken system is having on immigrant families, many of whom have one or more undocumented persons among their number. Federal and local law enforcement policies have led to an unprecedented separation of families, as undocumented parents are being separated from their U.S. citizen children. Children are often the innocent victims of these policies, which leave them without parents and less opportunity to live a full and productive life in their home country, the United States."

Joe Biden

- Biden voted yes on allowing illegal aliens to participate in Social Security and allowing more foreign workers into the U.S. for farm work. ([Source: Time Magazine](#))
 - Supported Bush plan: both border fence & path to citizenship. (Nov 2007)
 - Sanctuary cities exist because feds can't enforce their laws. (Sep 2007)
 - It's impractical to deport 14 million illegal immigrants. (Jun 2007)
 - Voted for border fence, but to tackle drug trafficking. (Jun 2007)
 - Voted YES on continuing federal funds for declared "sanctuary cities". (Mar 2008)
 - Voted YES on comprehensive immigration reform. (Jun 2007)
 - Voted NO on declaring English as the official language of the US government. (Jun 2007)
 - Voted YES on eliminating the "Y" nonimmigrant guest worker program. (May 2007)
 - Voted YES on building a fence along the Mexican border. (Sep 2006)
 - Voted YES on establishing a guest worker program. (May 2006)
 - Voted YES on allowing illegal aliens to participate in Social Security. (May 2006)
 - Voted YES on giving Guest Workers a path to citizenship. (May 2006)
 - Voted YES on allowing more foreign workers into the US for farm work. (Jul 1998)
 - Voted NO on visas for skilled workers. (May 1998)
 - Voted NO on limiting welfare for immigrants. (Jun 1997)
- ([SOURCE](#))

Paul Ryan

- “I have supported past efforts to strengthen our immigration laws and demanded enforcement of them, opposing any proposals that include amnesty for those that have violated our laws. I believe we need to find solutions that preserve the rule of law and do not reward illegal behavior. Illegal immigration, which is a direct result of this flawed system, is an affront to the rule of law and an unacceptable security risk for all Americans.” ([Source: Statement on Immigration](#))
 - Opposed the DREAM Act: “We must first secure the border and stem the flow of illegal immigration, and then work to increase legal immigration through an enforceable guest worker program and by developing a more secure employee verification system. I believe it would be a serious mistake to pursue piecemeal reforms like the DREAM Act without first putting in place these fundamental components of immigration reform.” ([Source: Press Statement](#))
 - Demand enforcement of immigration laws, without amnesty. (Aug 2012)
 - Make border fence construction a top priority. (Aug 2012)
 - More employer penalties but no "big brother" database. (Aug 2012)
 - Voted YES on building a fence along the Mexican border. (Sep 2006)
 - Voted YES on preventing tipping off Mexicans about Minuteman Project. (Jun 2006)
 - Voted NO on reporting illegal aliens who receive hospital treatment. (May 2004)
 - Voted YES on extending Immigrant Residency rules. (May 2001)
 - Rated 0% by [FAIR](#), indicating a voting record loosening immigration. (Dec 2003)
 - Rated 83% by [USBC](#), indicating a sealed-border stance. (Dec 2006)
- ([SOURCE](#))

This document was compiled by Tom McClusky, Senior Vice President for FRC Action and Nick Frase, Research Assistant. Issues covered reflect the views of the Catholic Church and the candidates.