

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMPARISON // NOV 3, 2020

In keeping with its mission, the Virginia 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 1, 2020, 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 VCC neither supports nor opposes any candidate for public office.

“The right to life implies and is linked to other human rights - to the basic goods that every human person needs to live and thrive. All the life issues are connected, for erosion of respect for the life of any individual or group in society necessarily diminishes respect for all life. The moral imperative to respond to the needs of our neighbors - basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work - is universally binding on our consciences and may be legitimately fulfilled by a variety of means. Catholics must seek the best ways to respond to these needs.... 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.” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Nos. 25, 26, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2019)

President
DONALD TRUMP



Former Vice-President
JOE BIDEN



ABORTION

In 2016, Trump said that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* “will happen automatically...because I am putting pro-life justices on the [U.S. Supreme] Court.”

In 2017, Trump signed into law a resolution to allow states to restrict Title X funding for Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers.

According to his website, “As president, Biden will work to codify *Roe v. Wade*, and his Justice Department will do everything in its power to stop the rash of state laws that so blatantly violate the constitutional right to an abortion...”

“As president, Biden will...reverse the Trump Administration’s rule preventing Planned Parenthood and certain other family planning programs from obtaining Title X funds.”

DEATH PENALTY

In 2020, the Trump Administration presided over five executions (three in July and two in August), the first to be carried out by the federal government in 17 years. Two additional executions are scheduled in September 2020.

According to his website, “Biden will work to pass legislation to eliminate the death penalty at the federal level, and incentivize states to follow the federal government’s example. These individuals should instead serve life sentences without probation or parole.”

EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

In February 2020, Trump said, “Yet, for too long, countless American children have been trapped in failing government schools. To rescue these students, 18 states have created school choice in the form of Opportunity Scholarships... no parent should be forced to send their child to a failing government school.”

In January 2020, Biden tweeted, “When we divert public funds to private schools, we undermine the entire public education system. We’ve got to prioritize investing in our public schools, so every kid in America gets a fair shot. That’s why I oppose vouchers.”

ENVIRONMENT

Trump has begun the process of withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris Agreement on climate change, an international agreement to reduce global green-house gas emissions.

According to his website, a Biden administration will re-enter the Paris Agreement on day one.

ETHICS IN RESEARCH

In 2019, the Trump Administration announced its decision to discontinue research conducted within the National Institutes of Health “involving the use of human fetal tissue from elective abortion”.

While serving in the U.S. Senate: In 2007, Biden voted in favor of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007 (S.5), which provides for human embryonic stem cell research. In 1998, Biden voted against the Human Cloning Prohibition Act (S.1601).

GENDER ISSUES

In 2019, the White House confirmed Trump’s opposition to 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: “The Trump Administration absolutely opposes discrimination of any kind and supports the equal treatment of all. However, this bill in its current form is filled with poison pills that threaten to undermine parental and conscience rights.”

According to his website, Biden believes the Equality Act is the “best vehicle for ensuring equal rights under the law for LGBTQ+ Americans, and will guarantee that LGBTQ+ individuals are protected under existing civil rights laws.” Biden lists enacting the Equality Act as a top legislative priority.



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HEALTH CARE ACCESS

According to his website, Trump “repealed the Obamacare individual mandate, expanded plan choices and increased competition to bring down costs for consumers.” In June 2020, the Trump administration argued in a legal brief that the entire Affordable Care Act (ACA) should be invalidated. Signed into law in 2010, ACA expanded access to health care coverage for the uninsured.

According to a White House fact sheet, Trump “is using all available means to ensure safe vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics are developed, manufactured, and distributed in unprecedented time and scale in response to COVID-19.”

According to his website, Biden will protect the Affordable Care Act and build on it by “giving Americans a new choice, a public health insurance option like Medicare; increasing the value of tax credits to lower premiums and extend coverage to more working Americans; [and] expanding coverage to low-income Americans.”

According to his website, Biden’s COVID-19 plan “ensures the wide availability of free testing; the elimination of all cost barriers to preventive care and treatment for COVID-19; the development of a vaccine; and the full deployment and operation of necessary supplies, personnel, and facilities.”

IMMIGRATION/REFUGEES

According to his website, “Upon entering office, President Trump called on Congress to fully fund a wall along the Southern border, to close legal loopholes that enable illegal immigration, to end chain migration, and to eliminate the visa lottery program.”

In July 2020, the Trump Administration announced it would reject applications for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program stating, “...the fact remains that Congress should act on this matter.”

The Trump Administration proposes resettling 18,000 refugees under a new refugee ceiling. The number admitted in 2016 was nearly 85,000.

According to Biden’s website, “As president, Joe will prioritize a comprehensive immigration reform to finally give 11 million undocumented immigrants a roadmap to citizenship.”

In June 2020, Biden stated, “As President, I will immediately work to make [DACA] permanent by sending a bill to Congress on day one of my Administration.”

Biden will set the annual global refugee admissions cap to 125,000.

POVERTY

In 2019, the Trump Administration opposed a House-passed bill that would raise the federal minimum wage to \$15, stating, “efforts to reduce taxes, eliminate regulations, and implement fairer trade deals are driving economic growth and increasing workers’ take-home pay far more effectively and efficiently than legislation like H.R. 582.” The current federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour; a number of states and localities have adopted higher rates.

According to Biden’s website, “He firmly believes all Americans are owed a raise, and it’s well past time we increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 across the country. This increase would include workers who aren’t currently earning the minimum wage, like the farmworkers who grow our food and domestic workers who care for our aging and sick and for those with disabilities.”

RACIAL EQUITY

In June 2020, Trump announced four steps to address racial inequity and police reform: 1) aggressively pursuing economic development in minority communities; 2) confronting healthcare disparities, including addressing chronic conditions and investing in minority-serving medical institutions; 3) an executive order that will encourage police departments nationwide to meet the most current professional standards for the use of force, including tactics for de-escalation; and 4) renewing a call on Congress to enact school choice.

In a June 2020 op-ed, Biden said, “We should also be directing our resources to actively undo the negative effect systemic racism has had on opportunities for black Americans,” citing inequities for African-American entrepreneurs, the gap in home ownership and discriminatory lending practices. Biden also said, “...I’m proposing an additional \$300 million to reinvigorate community policing in our country. Every single police department should have the money it needs to institute real reforms...”

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

In 2017, Trump signed an executive order, which states, “Federal law protects the freedom of Americans and their organizations to exercise religion and participate fully in civic life without undue interference by the Federal Government. The executive branch will honor and enforce those protections.”

In response to a July 2020 U.S. Supreme Court ruling preserving the religious liberty of the Little Sisters of the Poor, a White House statement said, “As the Supreme Court has previously stated, protecting the ability of people to worship and live according to the dictates of their conscience is part of ‘the best of our traditions.’”

According to Biden’s website, “The Trump-Pence Administration has deliberately and systematically attempted to gut protections for the LGBTQ+ community by carving out broad religious exemptions to existing nondiscrimination laws and policies across federal agencies. Biden will reverse Trump’s policies misusing these broad exemptions...”

Regarding the July 2020 ruling, Biden said the decision, “will make it easier for the Trump-Pence Administration to continue to strip health care from women--attempting to carve out broad exemptions to the Affordable Care Act’s commitment to giving all women free access to recommended contraception.”

