

Guidelines For Political Activity



Knights are first and foremost Catholic citizens who are members of their communities and constituents of their elected officials. A citizen most effectively petitions his elected official as an individual voter. Ordinarily, there is no need to refer to one's membership in the Knights of Columbus when petitioning an elected official. The message we want to send is "I am an informed constituent who has a principled stand [against / in favor of] your public policy choices and I vote." As Pope Benedict XVI has reminded us: "It is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States comes to realize the grave threats to the Church's public moral witness."^[1] To help members answer this call to faithful citizenship effectively, the Knights of Columbus provides the following list of political activity "DOs and DON'Ts":

DOs

- DO become active in the political life of your local community;
- DO register to vote and encourage others to register to vote;
- DO initiate and participate in robust "get out the vote" efforts to bring voters to the polls in all primary, general, and special elections;
- DO become informed on public policy issues of fundamental interest to the Catholic Church at the local, state, federal, and international levels;
- DO become acquainted with public policy initiatives of the national conferences of Catholic Bishops as well as state and provincial Catholic conferences;
- DO study and reflect upon the teachings of the Catholic Church so as to develop a well-formed Catholic conscience – a good place to start would be to review relevant sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM ;
- DO order booklets on specific issues of fundamental importance to Catholics published by the Catholic Information Service, <http://www.kofc.org/un/en/cis/index.html> ;
- DO share with others the Catholic Church's teachings on moral issues of fundamental importance to society;
- DO advocate for Catholic positions on local and national legislative and other issues of fundamental interest to the Catholic Church. This includes participation in action alert announcements that seek to make the voices of Catholic citizens heard on legislation of fundamental interest to the Catholic Church;
- DO write letters to the editor of local newspapers;
- DO know your elected representatives and their positions on issues of fundamental interest to the Catholic Church;
- DO correspond with your representatives and let them know that you support the Catholic position on issues of fundamental interest to the Catholic Church;
- DO thank representatives for their actions taken on issues of fundamental interest to the Catholic Church;

- DO join the Supreme Council and your State Council in advocating for public policy issues. When doing so, echo the sentiments and wording the Supreme Council or your State Council have already articulated; and
- DO VOTE!

DON'Ts

- DO NOT engage in any partisan political activity in the name of the Knights of Columbus. Partisan political activity is defined as including activity that seeks to endorse or oppose a candidate or party in a campaign for public office.
- DO NOT make partisan political statements in the name of the Knights of Columbus. A partisan political statement is defined as including statements that seek to endorse or oppose a candidate or party in a campaign for public office.
- DO NOT, on behalf of your local council, congratulate or admonish public officials in the name of the Knights of Columbus.
- DO NOT, on behalf of your local council, take a position on a matter of public policy unless you are joining a position the Supreme Council or your State Council has already articulated;
- DO NOT distribute any Knights of Columbus member lists or contact information to political campaigns or to individuals running for office;
- DO NOT use an official fraternal title in connection with your personal political activity, except to convey biographical information; and
- DO NOT use Knights of Columbus facilities, including, but not limited to, email accounts, social media, fax machines, letterhead and the like, in connection with partisan political activity.

[1] *ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT*, Consistory Hall, Thursday, 19 January 2012

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120119_bishops-usa_en.html (last visited March 16, 2012)

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