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August 20, 2010

Subject: Faithful Citizenship and CCK Policy on Political Activity

Dear Pastor, Parish Administrator, School Superintendent, Principal and Catholic Charities Director,

As we head into this year's fall political campaign season, we recall the obligation we have as Faithful Citizens to be participants in our nation's political process and to bring our values to the shaping of public policy. As we taught in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, every Catholic has a responsibility to be involved in political life:

In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, "It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person...As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life" (nos. 1913-1915).
<http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/>

Consistent with the prior practice of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, we bring to your attention *the Political Activity Guidelines for Catholic Organizations* as published by the Office of General Counsel, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Certain activities, such as non-partisan voter registration drives, are permitted. It should be noted, however, that there is an absolute prohibition against non-profit organizations, such as parishes, schools and Catholic Charities agencies, *"from participating or intervening in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office."* **<http://www.usccb.org/ogc/guidelines.shtml>**

As part of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky's history and policy regarding elections and voters' guides, we recall and repeat the long-standing policy of not distributing voters' guides or election year materials unless they have been published by the USCCB or the Catholic Conference of Kentucky. Such materials, even though they may be prepared by other Catholic

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Bishop of Lexington

**Most Reverend
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Bishop of Owensboro

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entities or people, may not be distributed on Catholic property or in conjunction with church activities since they may not cover a full range of issues and may violate the *Political Activity Guidelines for Catholic Organizations* and the requirements for non-profit organizations as issued by the Internal Revenue Service.

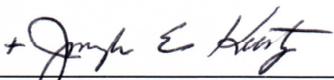
We established this policy in 1995 because of concerns expressed to us. The content and presentation of such voter guide education materials may fail to satisfy the requirements applicable to Catholic non-profit organizations. Often, the organizations preparing the materials are not 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations subject to the prohibition against political campaign activity. Even though these other organizations may be permitted to distribute such literature, it is not appropriate for Catholic organizations to do so.

While Catholics are encouraged to be active participants in the political process, all are required to abide by the *Political Activity Guidelines for Catholic Organizations*. The energy and passion often on display during elections should not encourage or permit individuals or organizations to violate these guidelines. We appreciate your taking the time to disseminate this letter's contents to your parish, especially parish council and parish committee chairs, school, Catholic Charities staff and to your entire parish through the parish bulletin and/or pulpit announcements to apprise them of what activities are permitted and what activities are prohibited during this election year.

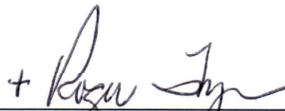
Thank you for your review and sharing of this letter and the information contained through the Internet links to the web site of the USCCB.

May God continue to bless you as together we seek to build God's Kingdom on earth.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



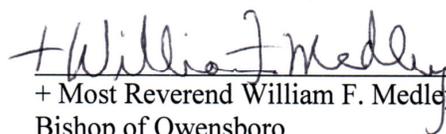
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