

GUIDANCE ON THE SPECIAL ELECTION IN OHIO; ISSUE 1

Last week the Diocesan Legal Office and the Diocesan Communications Office sent all pastors the following supplemental letter to Bishop Malesic's February letter that was posted in a past bulletin and is currently on our parish website. The following letter is intended to help us, as parish priests, in shepherding the people of our parishes regarding our Christian duty to vote and especially, to exercise that duty to vote in the upcoming special election of August 8 and then again voting for the November 7 ballot initiative. The November 7 issue is seeking to enshrine abortion into our Ohio State Constitution and also deprive parents of their rights to help their own children if they are faced with pregnancy or even if that child is influenced to take steps to change their gender. Depending on how the August 8 election goes, will either make this amendment easier or more difficult to pass on November 7.

DIOCESAN LETTER REGARDING PASTORAL CARE ON ISSUE 1

Dear Pastors,

The diocese has been receiving a number of calls regarding parishes either supporting or remaining silent on Issue 1, which is the proposed amendment to the Ohio Constitution that is on the ballot on August 8th. If passed, Issue 1 would make it more difficult for Ohioans to change the state constitution. Currently, it takes a simple majority vote of voters to pass a change to the constitution. The amendment proposes to change the constitution to require a vote of 60% of voters to amend the constitution going forward. Some callers have expressed disagreement with pastors who have chosen to actively support the passage of Issue 1 while other callers have expressed disagreement with pastors who are not actively supporting the passage of Issue 1.

Since Issue 1 is, essentially, a vote about a procedural matter (i.e., the procedure by which Ohioans amend the state constitution) and not directly dealing with substantive matters of moral concern, the Bishops of Ohio have decided not to take a stance one way or the other as to this initiative. That said, Issue 1 is being proposed in order to make it harder to pass the pro-abortion amendment that will be on the ballot in November and which the Bishops of Ohio are strongly opposing (see <https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/offices/parish-life/office-for-human-life/protect-them-both>.)

Of course, making it harder to pass constitutional amendments in the future will also have the effect of making it more difficult to pass pro-life or other amendments to the Ohio Constitution that the Church might wish to support in the future. Consequently, individuals can reasonably disagree as to whether to support or oppose Issue 1.

You as pastors are free to make prudential judgments (emphasis added) about whether or not to speak, write, or post signage at the parish regarding Issue 1. Regardless of what you choose to do or not do, it's likely you'll get feedback, both positive and negative. All we ask is that you consider carefully and prayerfully what you think is prudent and right in the context of your parish community.

Finally, please note that while it is not legal for a 501(c)(3) charity to support or oppose a candidate for elective office under any circumstances, it is legal for such a charity to engage in issue advocacy (i.e., "lobbying"), so long as it does not constitute a substantial part of its total activities.

FROM RIGHT TO LIFE OF NORTHEAST OHIO ON ISSUE 1

For those who want to protect pre-born human beings, Issue 1 is critical because of the probable abortion amendment ballot initiative that will be on the Ohio ballot in November of 2023. This dangerous

amendment proposal was passed in several states during the midterm elections of 2022 and in the majority of those states, was passed with far less than 60% of the vote in a campaign heavily supported by lucrative pro-abortion special interest groups. The proposed abortion amendment in Ohio is even more threatening because the language also will endanger parental rights. Should Issue 1 pass by the voters on August 8, it will require the November abortion ballot initiative to pass with at least 60% of the vote.

MY PRUDENTIAL JUDGMENT

If you would like my opinion, in light of what our hometown state of Ohio is facing, voting “yes” on Issue 1 will make it more difficult to change our Ohio State Constitution and thus allow us to protect the most vulnerable – the unborn and our children whom we are raising to be fully alive in the image and likeness of God who has created us. It will also help to ensure that parents maintain their rights to be the primary caretakers of their children who may face harmful, life-altering decisions.

I live for Jesus Christ,
Fr. Tom