



One Voice for Public Policy
MINNESOTA DISTRICTS

LUTHERAN VOTER INFORMATION GUIDE

Fall 2022

*Prepared by the members of the
Minnesota North and South Districts
LCMS Public Policy Advisory Committee*

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INTRODUCTION

This November's election is commonly referred to as a mid-term election. That means it is an election occurring halfway through the term of the current sitting President. As a practical matter, that means this election, at least on the Federal level, should be more heavily focused on the legislative branch of government than on the executive branch. That is, while voters in every election need to consider both the personality of the various candidates as well as where those candidates stand on the issues of the day, the mid-terms are typically much more focused on issues than on personalities. Which is to say, without the distraction of the presidential candidate personalities dominating people's thoughts, people are simply more likely to pay greater attention to the public policy issues at hand than they will two years from now, in 2024.

All of which makes it even more important for voters to have reliable resources that will assist them focus on issues – not personalities or parties. That, dear friends, is the goal of this Lutheran Voter Guide. As it was in 2016, 2018 and 2020, the intent of this 2022 Guide is to help Lutheran Christians better exercise their citizenship by helping them better understand the issues of the day from a Biblical perspective. This, in turn, will help our members formulate better questions to ask of the various candidates for office as they solicit your vote, and help our members better evaluate the candidates' answers. It is also intended to help members better articulate the Biblical viewpoint on various issues, and to help guide the candidate in his or her decision-making, should they be elected to public office.

So, what are these various issues? The particular public policy issues that this Guide speaks to are those issues to which The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) has spoken publicly in the past. These include the general areas of life issues (abortion and physician assisted suicide); issues surrounding marriage, family and sexuality; issues concerning religious liberty; and, finally, the issue of parental rights, especially in regard to education.

The Public Policy Committee of the Minnesota Districts hopes that in the weeks ahead, you will take the time necessary to familiarize yourself with the Biblical perspective on these four issue areas as you decide who you will support and vote for in November. This resource is intended to serve as a simple, brief description of what the Bible and our Church body, the LCMS, have to say on these topics. We also offer a few simple questions you might ask those running for public office.

There are, of course, many other issues for Lutheran voters to consider and to which the counsel of God's Word should be brought. But, in contrast to the four specified issues mentioned above, the "Christian position" on these other issues is much more ambiguous and, thus, will require each person to apply their own good and prayerful judgment.

This is by no means an exhaustive resource intended to speak to all the complexities inherent in a nation of free people governing themselves. It is intended to be a tool to aide our members in better using the political process to serve the long-term interests of the neighbor as God gives them the ability to do so. To that end, may God bless your efforts as you put your love of God and neighbor into action this Fall.

I. Regarding Life Issues

ABORTION

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod holds (1979 Res. 3-02A) that abortion is contrary to God’s Word and is not an acceptable moral option, except to prevent the death of the mother (Ps. 139: 13-15).

The complexion of this issue has, of course, changed dramatically since the U.S. Supreme Court issued its “Dobbs ruling” this past June 24th. In it, the Court overturned its earlier Roe vs. Wade decision, declaring there is nothing in the U.S. Constitution which can be understood to confer a constitutional right to abortion. Thus, the question of whether or not to allow abortions, or in what way to regulate them, is returned to the States (from whom it was wrongly taken by Roe) to be decided through the regular political and judicial processes of each state.

The practical implications of this change, though certainly many and profound, are not clear and will take years to find a new “equilibrium.” What is clear is that this issue has moved much closer to home. No longer in faraway Washington D.C. hidden behind the impenetrable and imposing walls of the Court, it has taken up residence right in our back yard, and is now an issue for the people to decide.

As a result, each Christian person and, by extension, each congregation, is called to a new, more active level of engagement, not just on the political front, but also in doing the work needed to provide for the care of newborn children, as well as their mothers and fathers, locally. We have entered a new era which holds great potential for reclaiming our society, so that it, once again, is a place where God’s Word is honored and those made in His image, regardless of age or maturity, are again accorded the dignity that God intends for all people. It is a new era which will require a great and sustained effort on the part of Christian people as we demonstrate His love to our most vulnerable neighbors.

Suggested questions for political candidates:

- 1) As a Christian, I believe that intentionally ending the life of an unborn child, except to save the life of the mother, should be made illegal in Minnesota. Do you share that view and will you actively use your elected office to pursue that end?
- 2) As a Christian, I believe it is important to care for pregnant mothers before their child’s birth, and for both mother and child after birth. If elected, will you use your office to advocate for greater support for pregnancy resource centers, as well as legislation to make adoptions easier?

ASSISTED SUICIDE

In recent years, many states, including Minnesota, have had legislation introduced that would make it legal for doctors or other medical providers to prescribe medications that intentionally cause the death of their patient. The LCMS strongly opposes this effort, both because human life is sacred (1995, Res. 6-02) and because such an action usurps God’s role in determining “the number of our days” (Job 14:5). By

legalizing assisted suicide, the door would also be opened to a host of negative effects, including abuse of the elderly and the disabled, as well as, denying the rights of conscience to medical providers.

However, since we are also sensitive to the reality of human suffering (emotional, psychological and physical) we are also strong advocates for the improvement of, and increased access to, comfort (palliative) care. We also strongly encourage our members to be personally active in providing the care, encouragement and hope needed by those who are experiencing sufferings of various kinds, so as to lessen their suffering and to remove any desire to end their own life (II Cor. 1: 4).

Suggested questions for political candidates:

- 1) As a Christian, I believe we are called to do what we can to end the suffering of the living, not the life of the suffering. Would you share this sentiment? As an elected leader, will you support legislation that will improve palliative care for all those suffering from emotional, psychological, or physical pain?
- 2) If elected, will you commit to supporting legislation that will improve access to high quality palliative care for all those suffering from emotional, psychological, or physical pain?

II. Regarding Marriage, Family, and Sexuality

The LCMS believes that God created the world and everything in it. Indeed, He has created a world of great beauty which is intended for our enjoyment and which gives a clear witness to His power, wisdom, and love (Acts 17:24).

We also believe He has infused a deep and intricate order within that world, both in its physical and social dimensions. It is an order God has revealed to us both through the natural law, knowable by all people through human reason, and through the special revelation of the Bible. While we believe that pure, uncorrupted reason and revelation are always in harmony, we are also well aware our sense of reason is often distorted due to our sinful human nature. Therefore, our view of human sexuality is shaped primarily by the witness of the Bible, and only secondarily by the application of human reason as informed by our Christian faith.

We hold that while all people are equal in dignity and worth, they are not identical. Among other things, this means humans were intentionally created by God to be of two distinct, but complementary kinds, male and female. Therefore, we stand opposed to any effort that would seek to erase or minimize the distinction between male and female persons or treat our sex as “fluid.” We, likewise, stand opposed to any effort to mislead children about this natural order of creation, especially as it applies to their own sexuality.

We also hold that marriage is always and only between one man and one woman, and therefore, we cannot accept the assertion that so-called “same-sex marriages” are a part of God’s good created order.

In addition, we oppose any efforts to limit the speech of counselors who are responding to a person's request to help them resolve issues of bodily acceptance (gender dysphoria). Finally, we hold that pornographic use of the human body denigrates both the producer and consumer of it by objectifying the human body and, thus, denying the goodness of God's creation. Indeed, in support of this Biblical perspective, there are now clear scientific links between the increasing consumption of pornography in the culture and the dramatic increase in sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. Therefore, we urge those in government to take decisive steps to restrict pornography and its resulting harms.

Suggested questions for political candidates:

- 1) I believe we are created beings and that there is a God-intended social order to which we personally should conform and which the laws of our land should reflect. Do you share this general understanding?
- 2) Do you think it is proper for government to require its citizens to accept views of human sexuality (e.g. normalizing transgenderism) which may contradict their religiously-held views?
- 3) If elected, will you work to protect the rights of PreK – 12 parents to easily monitor what is being taught to their children regarding marriage, family and sexuality; and to easily withdraw their children from such instruction if they feel it necessary?
- 4) In school settings, I recognize we are called to show respect and have compassion for those struggling with matters of sexual identity. Yet, I also believe it's important to acknowledge biological maleness and femaleness as a natural division which society assumes and which shapes the way we operate our schools and society generally. Do you believe that; and do you believe our schools should reflect that understanding, particularly with respect to matters of personal privacy and bodily safety?
- 5) As an office holder, would you actively oppose giving pro-abortion and other advocacy organizations special access to students in public schools in order to promote controversial forms of sex-education (often called Comprehensive Sex Education) or other forms of political indoctrination such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) or gender ideology?

III. Regarding Religious Freedom

In the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, we believe that in society, each person has the right to freely choose their religious beliefs and is also free to live out those beliefs free from coercion, especially coercion by the government. We see this religious freedom as being consistent with what the Bible teaches and which has rightly been incorporated in our State and Federal Constitutions. We understand this religious freedom to guarantee citizens the right to speak and act according to what they believe, not just in the privacy of their homes and within the confines of their church, but also out in the public square and infused into their daily lives. Furthermore, we believe this freedom of religion and the closely

related freedom of conscience, serves as the foundation for every other freedom named in the Constitution. Therefore, we find it improper to elevate any other concerns (including other Constitutional rights) over the fundamental right of religious liberty.

Suggested questions for political candidates:

- 1) How important is religious freedom to you personally?
- 2) In what ways will you use your office and your personal influence to support a full and robust view of religious liberty?
- 3) In your view, is religious freedom a limited freedom, restricted to our private lives or within the church setting, or is it a more expansive freedom intended to be lived out in all settings of daily life?

IV. Regarding Parental Choice in Education

UNBIASED EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

In the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, we understand that providing the monetary resources to educate all children, through taxation, is a legitimate and important function of the State. In doing so, great benefits accrue, both to the individual being educated and to society as a whole. Collecting the monetary resources for education, however, does not mean the State should be the sole, or even the preferred, provider of educational services.

Throughout our nation’s history, there have been many different types of schools from which parents have freely chosen and which have provided high quality educational services. Indeed, all of these schools are rightly thought of as “public” schools, in the sense they all educate for the public good.

Some of these schools are non-religious (secular) in nature and some are religious. Because the State is constitutionally obligated not to show favoritism between religion and non-religion in general, it follows that the State by its actions should not be permitted to bias the decision of parents for or against religious schools. Yet, that is what the State of Minnesota currently does. By collecting money for education from everyone (both religious and non-religious people) and redistributing that money only to those children whose parents choose a non-religious (secular) form of education, it clearly biases the decision of parents against choosing a religious education and thus favors non-religious education. We contend this is improper both under the First Amendment (free exercise of religion) and under the Fourteenth Amendment (equal protection under the law). Indeed, in a recent string of Supreme Court rulings (the Trinity Lutheran ruling of 2016, the Espinosa ruling of 2020, and the Makin ruling of 2022), it is clear that denying religious citizens a benefit – a free elementary and secondary education - that is offered to all other citizens, is a violation of the Federal Constitution.

Therefore, we strongly urge our elected leaders in the State of Minnesota to pass legislation which will support the educational choices of all parents equally. This should be done by changing its funding practices to allow State-collected monies to follow all students to the school of the parents' choosing, whether that school be religious or non-religious. This is the intent, for example, of Education Savings Accounts – a new funding model which has been introduced into the Minnesota legislature and which is currently operating in at least eight states.

Suggested questions for political candidates:

- 1) As a candidate for state office, do you think it is proper for the government to fund education in a way that makes it more financially difficult for parents to choose a religious school than a non-religious school?
- 2) Are you willing to use your office to bring changes to the State's school funding mechanism that will honor the educational choices of all parents, including the choice of religious schools?

FREEDOM TO SELECT AND DIRECT EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

The authority and responsibility to educate children belongs to parents (Eph. 6:1-4). It is an authority that gives parents the right to express their preferences regarding the general content of education (religiously informed or not) and to place their children in a school setting where that content is reflected in the curriculum and the general school atmosphere. That authority may, of course, be delegated in part to teachers and administrators under the concept of *in loco parentis*. However, at all times, the parent remains the primary authority, with teachers and schools ultimately accountable to them.

Since this is the case, we are greatly concerned (MN South Resolution 3 03, 2022) when schools or the State's education establishment act in ways which seem to deny the primacy of parents. This they have done by introducing radical educational concepts which are clearly out of step with prevailing community standards and which fly in the face of clearly articulated parental preferences. Frequently, these new concepts reflect the intention of schools to engage in various forms of social engineering and/or political advocacy rather than staying focused on achieving basic academic competencies.

To protect the status of parents as the primary authority in the life of their child, we believe all parents must be given the financial capacity to choose the school which is best suited to meet the needs of the child as determined by the parent. We are convinced that only then will parents receive the respect due their office. Again, we find Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) to be the best vehicle to achieve these ends, and would urge legislators to bring them into being in Minnesota, quickly!

Suggested questions for political candidates:

1. If elected, are you willing to use your office and your personal influence to support new State programs like Education Savings Accounts which make it clear that parents are truly the primary authority in the lives of their children?

For more information about our public policy efforts, visit mnsdistrict.org/public-policy or email Rev. Fred Hinz at fred.hinz@mnsdistrict.org