

Wyoming Catholic Register's ...

Primary Election Voting Guide

A Letter to Catholic Politicians and Public Officials on the Subject of Abortion and the Law

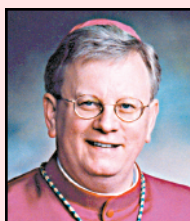
Pastoral Letter of Bishop David Ricken

In the 2004 Spring Meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops held in Denver, the Bishops issued a statement, *Catholics in Political Life*. (1) One of our commitments at that meeting was the "need to teach clearly and help our Catholic leaders to teach clearly on our unequivocal commitment to the legal protection of human life from the moment of conception until natural death." We further committed ourselves to "persuade all people that human life is precious and human dignity must be defended. This requires more effective dialogue and engagement with all public officials, especially Catholic public officials. We welcome conversation initiated by political leaders themselves." (2)

It is in the spirit and as a follow up to this commitment of the Catholic Bishops that I present the following, *A Letter to Catholic*

"This letter has been written as to a friend to those brave Catholic men and women in public life, in the legislature, in government and in public service. It is meant to be a helpful word to

them in facing the most serious moral crisis of our time, and the subject of our most serious public debate since slavery."



Bishop David Ricken

Politicians and Public Officials on the Subject of Abortion and the Law.

Introduction

In 1875, John Henry Newman, later the great English Cardinal, had to answer the accusation that

Catholics of England could not be good citizens of Great Britain. (3) According to the Prime Minister of England, William Gladstone, there was an essential conflict between the Catholics' loyalty to the Pope and the laws of Great Britain. The

Catholic citizens of Great Britain, on the very basis of what they believed, could not be loyal subjects of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria.

Today, in the United States, it is said, and seems to be borne out by the actions and statements of certain Catholic politicians, that it is impossible to be a loyal Catholic and an elected member of the Senate or the House of Representatives.

This opinion is based on the fact that there are presently certain laws of the country and certain decisions of the Supreme Court opposed to teachings of the Catholic Church, in particular, the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973, declaring the practice of abortion lawful.

This presents a seeming conflict of conscience for Catholics in public life, in particular, a Catholic member of the Senate or the House of Representatives, who is bound by his profession of the **continued on page 2**

Dear reader:

Welcome to a special section of the *Wyoming Catholic Register* featuring a series of articles on Catholic responsibility when voting and suggestions on how to make judgements about who to vote for; a poll of the Wyoming candidates for state office; and a pastoral letter from Bishop David Ricken. Although the letter is addressed to Catholic politicians, it contains valuable information for all Catholics concerned about the issues of abortion and public life. We urge you to take the time to read this important document.

Please save this special section and refer to it as you make your decisions when voting in the primary election, Aug. 17. If you do not see your legislator's information in this special section, contact them directly to ask them about their stance on important issues facing them.

We hope you find this section useful. We intend to do a similar questionnaire for the November general election.

State candidates weigh in on variety of issues

By Paula Glover
Editor

CHEYENNE — If you've ever been unhappy with the quality of political candidates in the November elections, now is the time to examine the candidates and cast your vote in the primary elections.

The selection for voters is better in the primary elections and you may just find one candidate now that matches most, or many, of the issues that you're interested in.

To help voters make these important choices, for the first time we're offering a Primary Election Voting Guide. We chose some obviously "Catholic" issues such as abortion, the death penalty and euthanasia, along with

Analysis

some general issues that might help a voter make a choice between candidates where there is otherwise not a clear choice.

As you read the candidates responses in this special edition of the Register, please note that some of the answers are blank. We did offer the candidates some complex, substantive issues, and many candidates felt the question couldn't be answered in a multiple choice format, so they skipped that particular question. However, we felt there was no other way to accommodate 157 candidates other than a check-list format and can't allow the space for individ-

ual comments.

The original questionnaires are available for inspection in the Register office at 2121 Capitol Avenue in Cheyenne if anyone would care to come and see any comments made by candidates.

There is encouraging news on life issues, with many candidates supporting a restriction on abortion to times of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother. Five candidates specifically requested to be listed as favoring abortion only when the life of the mother is threatened.

Even more encouraging is that only two candidates outright support euthanasia, or assisted suicide, although the sponsor of a bill to legalize assisted suicide in

the last legislative session, Keith Goodenough (D-Casper) did not respond to the survey.

More education faces those who oppose the death penalty, as only eight candidates said they would vote to ban the death penalty.

Please take the time to examine the issues, read the educational materials in this issue and then go to the primary election and cast your vote.

As Catholics, we should remember the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Social action ... should always have the common good in view and be in conformity with the message of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church."