



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Candidate Questionnaire Project

The Church Questions Policymakers

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL QUESTIONS BACKGROUNDER

Do you support or oppose...

CONSCIENCE PROTECTION: Passing the Conscience Protection Act, which protects health care providers from being forced to pay for or participate in abortions based on moral or religious objections?

The Conscience Protection Act of 2016 would make permanent the protections of the Hyde/Weldon conscience amendment, which forbids governments receiving federal health care funds to discriminate against those who decline to take part in abortion or abortion coverage. The Obama administration has said it supports the Weldon Amendment (76 Fed. Reg. 9968, 9974 (Feb. 23, 2011)) and it has been approved by Congress every year since 2004 as a part of annual appropriations law.

This Act would also ensure that victims of discrimination under that policy have a right of action to protect their rights in court.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: Funding the Green Climate Fund to help poor countries better mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change?

The Green Climate Fund is an independent, global fund established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. U.S. contributions, and the collective contributions made by other advanced economies, will provide resources to poor countries around the world that are the most adversely affected by rising sea levels, drought conditions, and extreme weather events so they may better respond to the challenges of climate change.

IMMIGRATION REFORM: Achieving comprehensive reform that offers a path to citizenship for the undocumented who live in the U.S. and do not have a criminal record, expands family reunification and worker visas, secures our borders, and establishes humane enforcement practices?

Comprehensive immigration reform includes:

- *Earned citizenship (not amnesty): An earned citizenship program would allow foreign nationals who are living in the U.S. and do not have a criminal record the opportunity to adjust their immigration status. Such a program would create an eventual path to citizenship, requiring applicants to complete and pass background checks, pay a fine, and establish eligibility for resident status to participate in the program.*
- *Expansion of visas:*
 - *The expansion of family reunification visas will reduce current backlogs in family categories of persons who have been waiting for numerous years to enter the U.S. and reunite with their families with proper documentation*
 - *A temporary worker program allows safe, legal entry and job portability for migrant workers while meeting the nation's economic demand for immigrant labor*
- *Secure borders: The interception of unauthorized migrants who attempt to travel to the U.S. must be targeted, proportional, and humane.*

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE: Expanding funding for U.S. international humanitarian and development assistance, which currently represents 0.6% of the federal budget?

Poverty-focused international development represents just over one-half percent (0.6%) of the federal budget. Sustainable development and humanitarian programs seek long-term solutions in under-developed and poor countries.

Examples of priority accounts and proposed funding levels can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/upload/fy-17-chart-of-priority-accounts-usccb-crs-17feb2016.pdf>

NUCLEAR ARMS REDUCTION: Reducing the risks posed by nuclear weapons through such concrete steps as scaling back the U.S. plan to build a new generation of nuclear weapons and reducing the U.S. deployed strategic arsenal?

Nuclear weapons remain a real and urgent threat to humanity and our planet. If there is even a limited nuclear exchange, millions—if not billions—of people could perish, large swaths of the planet could be contaminated, and the global economy could collapse.

Meaningful nuclear risk-reduction steps include:

- *Scaling back the U.S. plan to build a new generation of nuclear weapons, including canceling the new nuclear-armed cruise missile and refusing to fund such weapons;*
- *Reducing the U.S. deployed strategic arsenal by a third, a level the Pentagon agrees is adequate to maintain security; and*
- *Removing U.S. land-based nuclear missiles from hair-trigger alert, which would reduce the risk of an accidental, mistaken or unauthorized launch.*

PARENTAL EMPOWERMENT: Establishing elementary and secondary education scholarship programs for students in military families to attend nonpublic schools?

Legislation to provide tax credits or direct aid to families for educational expenses, including nonpublic school tuition, has been considered by Congress. Education savings accounts (ESA) and corporate tax credit programs in 16 states have helped thousands of families to exercise school choice through state tax codes. Similar programs could be considered at the federal level.

PRIORITY FOR THE POOR: Protecting the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits to decrease poverty?

The Earned Income Tax Credit and refundable Child Tax Credit reduce poverty, promote work, and create opportunity for vulnerable workers and their families. Taken together, in 2013, they reduced child poverty by over six percent.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: Approving the First Amendment Defense Act, which bars the federal government from discriminating against individuals and organizations so they may continue to operate in accord with moral beliefs related to sexuality and marriage?

The First Amendment Defense Act (FADA) currently pending in Congress would prohibit the federal government from discriminating against individuals and organizations based upon their religious beliefs or moral convictions that marriage is the union of one man and one woman or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage. The Act provides broad protections, including in the areas of federal contracts, grants, employment, and tax-exempt status. The bills were introduced June 17, 2015 in the U.S. Senate (S. 1598) and in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 2802).