



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Candidate Questionnaire Project

The Church Questions Policymakers

FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE QUESTIONS BACKGROUNDER

Do you support or oppose...

ALTERNATIVES TO ABORTION: Allocating resources for the Florida Pregnancy Care Network to support women seeking alternatives to abortion?

The Florida Pregnancy Care Network consists of 98 pregnancy resource centers throughout Florida that help meet the emotional and physical needs of pregnant women and assist them in preparing to parent their baby or place their baby for adoption. Typical direct services include pregnancy tests, pregnancy, childbirth and parenting education, counseling, referrals, infant care and parenting classes.

CHOICE IN EDUCATION: Expanding existing scholarship programs to allow parents to select the best educational opportunities for their school-aged children?

Florida currently offers four major scholarship programs for students in pre-kindergarten up to 12th grade.

- *The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (FTC) serves kindergarten to 12th grade students from low-income families.*
- *The McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Programs serves kindergarten to 12th grade students with physical or mental impairments ranging from cerebral palsy to dyslexia.*
- *The Gardiner Scholarship Program serves students with special needs by allowing parents to use scholarship funds for nonpublic school tuition or a combination of services such as tuition, tutoring, speech language therapy, online education and other authorized expenses.*
- *The Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) provides pre-kindergarten scholarships on a free, opt-in basis for 1 year.*

Options to expand the FTC, McKay and Gardiner programs include broadening eligibility and increasing funding. Expanding VPK involves increasing per-child scholarship amounts.

CONSUMER PROTECTION: Establishing a maximum 30% annual percentage rate (APR) that payday lenders can charge?

Florida's laws allow payday lenders to continue to charge an average Annual Percentage Rate (APR) of 278%, even though Florida's criminal usury rate is 18% APR. The economic drain of payday lending is disproportionately concentrated in Florida's minority communities, and has seen significant growth among senior citizens.

In 2015 alone, payday lenders charged over \$311 million in fees and interest. Over 83% of Florida payday loans were to Floridians who borrowed seven or more loans per year in order to meet their monthly expenses.

In 2016, the Florida legislature passed a bill authorizing the Office of Financial Regulation to take administrative action for a violation of the federal Military Lending Act, which, among other protections, includes a 36% APR cap for active duty service members and dependents.

DEATH PENALTY REPEAL: Ending Florida's use of the death penalty while preserving the alternative of a life sentence without parole?

In 2015, the nation marked a 25 year low in executions. Of the 31 states that maintain the death penalty, Florida is one of only six states that carried out executions last year.

It is notable that Florida has the highest number of death row exonerations and maintains the second most populous death row in the U.S. of nearly 400 people.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION: Respecting First Amendment freedoms of individuals and organizations so they may continue to operate in accord with moral beliefs related to life, sexuality and marriage?

Both Florida and the federal government have been able to establish policies that respect the rights of all stakeholders holding divergent views that involve fundamental rights. These are recognized as moral or religious conscience protections.

The most recognized examples relate to abortion. Similar protections exist today in Florida law with respect to family planning, end-of-life decisions and participation in executions.

Legislation is anticipated in areas where there are divergent views over marriage, gender dysphoria (transgenderism, gender identity) and same-sex attraction (sexual orientation).

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION: Regulating recruiters of foreign workers to reduce labor trafficking?

Recruiters of foreign labor are increasingly relied upon to facilitate the migration of laborers from their respective home countries to their destination country. While many recruiters behave ethically and are engaged in lawful conduct, a growing percentage are often complicit with, or directly involved in, trafficking of workers.

JUVENILE INDICTMENT MINIMUM: Ensuring that children under the age of fourteen cannot be tried as adults?

State prosecutors in Florida have the discretion to file a minor's case in criminal court. The process of transferring a juvenile's case through the process of direct file requires the minor be at least 14 years old; however, there is currently no age minimum for children to be transferred to the adult justice system through the process of indictment.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE PREVENTION: Preserving Florida law that bans doctor-prescribed suicide?

Euthanasia and mercy killing, or any affirmative or deliberate act or omission to end life other than to permit the natural process of dying, are prohibited by Florida law (Ch. 765.309 F.S.) Likewise, every person deliberately assisting another in the commission of self-murder shall be guilty of manslaughter, a felony in the second degree. (Ch. 782.08 F.S.)