

# Faithful Citizenship In Virginia

On November 5, voters will elect members to all 140 seats in the Virginia General Assembly – 40 in the Senate and 100 in the House of Delegates.

*“Many issues are important. ... Not all issues have equal moral weight. ... Protecting life is paramount. ... Please vote on November 5 with a well formed conscience as a faithful Catholic and as a citizen of our Commonwealth.”*

BEING FAITHFUL CATHOLICS AND CITIZENS IN OUR COMMONWEALTH,  
PRE-ELECTION LETTER BY BISHOP BURBIDGE AND BISHOP KNESTOUT, SEPT. 2019.



## LIFE

*“There are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. ... These are called ‘intrinsically evil’ actions. They must always be rejected and opposed. ... A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia.”*

FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP,  
NO. 22, U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, 2015.

Laws permitting abortion are “profoundly unjust” because they fail to recognize equal rights for every child, born and unborn (*Living the Gospel of Life*, Nos. 32, 35, *U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 1998). The following **extreme abortion expansion legislation** was considered by the Virginia General Assembly in 2019 and **is expected to be considered again in 2020**:

- **Eliminating most restrictions on second and third trimester abortions.**
- **Making abortion a “fundamental right” in the Virginia Human Rights Act.**
- **Eliminating health and safety standards that protect women seeking abortions.**
- **Ratifying the *Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)*, the language of which has already been used to challenge and overturn pro-life laws in other states.**

A bill to legalize assisted suicide, also introduced in 2019, is expected to resurface in 2020. Government should prevent, not promote suicide. The purpose of the medical profession is to heal, not to kill.

## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

*“Religious freedom certainly means the right to worship God, individually and in community, as our consciences dictate. But religious liberty, by its nature, transcends places of worship and the private sphere of individuals and families.”*

POPE FRANCIS, REMARKS AT INDEPENDENCE HALL,  
PHILADELPHIA, SEPT. 26, 2015.

Catholic organizations throughout Virginia provide vital services to the poorest and most vulnerable. Religious liberty ensures Virginians the freedom to follow sincerely held religious beliefs in the service of others and in their daily lives. The following legislation – considered by the General Assembly in previous years and expected to be reconsidered in 2020 – threatens the freedom to serve:

- **Mandating that private health plans in Virginia cover abortions, contraceptives, sterilizations and abortion-inducing drugs – forcing employers with religious or moral objections to violate their consciences.**
- **Denying religious employers and service providers the ability to operate consistently with their beliefs on human sexuality and marriage – creating lawsuits against faith-based providers.**



## POVERTY

*“A basic moral test for any society is how it treats those who are most vulnerable.”*

FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP, NO. 53.

Many struggle to afford basic needs and are trapped in cycles of debt and poverty. The following proposals to help low-income families, previously debated by the General Assembly, are expected to be seen again in 2020:

- *Providing low-income children scholarships to attend private schools their families choose through the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits Program.*
- *Ending predatory lending practices.*
- *Helping Virginia’s lowest income working families by improving the state Earned Income Tax Credit.*

## IMMIGRANTS

*“The Gospel mandate to ‘welcome the stranger’ requires Catholics to care for and stand with newcomers.”*

FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP, NO. 81.

At the national level, much-needed comprehensive immigration reform is a matter for Congress. At the state level, the Virginia General Assembly has debated two bills – both expected to be re-introduced in 2020 – to help immigrant families locally with transportation and education:

- *Helping immigrants get to work, go to school, access healthcare and attend church by creating a state-issued permit granting driving privileges to those who cannot obtain driver’s licenses because of their immigration status.*
- *Allowing undocumented immigrant youth who graduate from Virginia high schools to access in-state college tuition if they apply for permanent residency and they or a parent filed Virginia tax returns.*

## GUN VIOLENCE

On July 9, the Virginia General Assembly convened for a Special Session to consider a wide range of proposed bills relating to guns and public safety. The bills were all referred to the Virginia State Crime Commission, which heard public testimony on them on August 20. The statement issued by Bishop Burbidge and Bishop Knestout on the Special Session and the testimony presented by the Virginia Catholic Conference to the Crime Commission can be found at [www.vacatholic.org](http://www.vacatholic.org). The Special Session will reconvene on November 18.



CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
OF ARLINGTON



CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
OF RICHMOND

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