GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL ISSUES

1. Efforts should be made at the parish level to help parishioners understand and accept the importance of their involvement in the political process by participation in all elections (primary and general, local and national).

2. The Church, through its leadership, has not only a right but an obligation to speak to the moral dimension of political issues.

3. The Church's primary responsibility in the political arena is one of being educated — of being aware of the moral implications of political issues. The leadership of the Church has an obligation to provide guidance concerning the rightness and wrongness, good or evil of any specific issue.

4. In fulfilling this responsibility to provide moral guidance on political issues, however, the Church does not wish to engage in political activity. Consequently, Church leadership (including archdiocesan officials, or offices, pastors, deacons, employees, parish councils):

a) may not endorse political parties or take any action that could be construed as endorsement on the part of the Church (or describe political parties as negative entities).

b) may not endorse individual political candidates or take any action that could be construed as endorsement on the part of the Church (or describe candidates in a negative fashion).

c) may not make available the use of church facilities to one party or candidate;

d) should not authorize anyone to distribute political material on church property; (Persons who attempt to do so should be asked to leave church grounds. The distribution of political materials off church property cannot be prohibited, although it should never be authorized.)

e) may not use church publications, inserts or attachments thereto (Sunday bulletins, etc.) to support, promote, or endorse any particular party or candidate. (See number 6 below.)

5. For voter education, facilities can be made available, if a fair cross section of candidates is invited to participate in a debate or forum at which a variety of issues is discussed without any biased limitation of topics. If the program includes a question and answer period, each candidate should be given the opportunity to answer questions. Bias should not be exhibited by using rehearsed questions to entrap certain candidates.

6. Special care should be exercised in distributing materials which attempt to report candidates' stands on specific issues. Before permission to distribute such materials is given, the materials must be reviewed for political comment that constitutes endorsement.

Offices, parishes, schools, institutions, and agencies should not distribute voter education materials that are not authorized and distributed by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, the State Catholic Conference or the National Bishops' Conference.

7. A Christian's social concern should extend to the entire spectrum of social issues. While some concerns may be weightier than others, citizens should nevertheless be encouraged to inform themselves of a candidate's stand on all issues before making a final judgment. It would be a disservice to encourage citizens to take an overly simplistic "single issue" approach.

8. The effectiveness of these guidelines demands that they be impartially applied to all candidates or parties, whether an individual candidate or party supports the Church's position on a specific issue or not. If effective moral leadership has been provided on the issues, the choice of candidates can confidently be left to each individual.

9. These anti-political rules also apply to any parish web site.

10. The website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops contains useful information on political activity guidelines. Please go to the website http://www.usccb.org/about/general-counsel/political-activity-guidelines.cfm for the Political Activity and Lobbying Guidelines for Catholic Organizations.

11. The link to the *Faithful Citizenship* page on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/.