Know the Positions of the Presidential Candidates

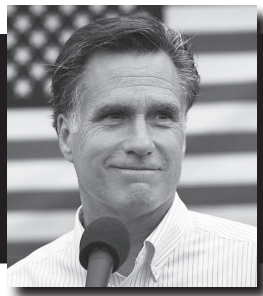
In keeping with its mission, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) aims to educate and inform Catholics about a wide range of issues. The information listed here has been compiled from policies, public statements, official and campaign websites and other resources to help voters inform their consciences before heading to the voting booth. The issues appear here in alphabetical order for informational purposes only and do not represent a complete list of issues that may be of importance to Catholics. The PCC neither supports nor opposes any candidate for public office. The underlined text below indicates a hyperlink to the source. Go to www.pacatholic.org to view these links.

DEMOCRAT

President
BARACK OBAMA

REPUBLICAN

Former Governor
MITT ROMNEY



ABORTION

On the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* in 2012, Obama said, "I remain committed to protecting a woman's right to choose and this fundamental constitutional right."

At a 2011 debate, Romney said he is "firmly pro-life…and I believe in the sanctity of life from the very beginning until the very end."

DEATH PENALTY

In his 2006 book *Audacity of Hope* (pgs. 57-58), Obama wrote, "While the evidence tells me that the death penalty does little to deter crime, I believe there are some crimes – mass murder, the rape and murder of a child – so heinous ... that the community is justified in expressing the full measure of its outrage by meting out the ultimate punishment. On the other hand, the way capital cases were tried in Illinois at the time was so rife with error, questionable police tactics, racial bias, and shoddy lawyering, that 13 death row inmates had been exonerated."

While governor, Romney filed legislation to reinstate capital punishment in Massachusetts and "make the death penalty available for the most heinous of crimes." In his April 28, 2005, letter to the legislature, he stated the proposed death penalty statute would be "as narrow and as foolproof as humanly possible" and provide "protections to the accused while at the same time offering an appropriate punishment for the most atrocious murders."

EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

A 2011 statement from the Executive Office of the President stated, "Private school vouchers are not an effective way to improve student achievement." The Obama administration "strongly opposes expanding the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program and opening it to new students."

Romney's proposal, entitled "A Chance for Every Child," states, "A Romney administration will expand the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, offering more students a chance to attend a better school and providing a model of parental choice for the nation."

EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

Obama's 2009 Executive Order revoked previous presidential directives that limited federally funded experimentation on human embryonic stem cells. His order expands eligible federally funded research to all stem cell lines, including those derived from human embryos created for research purposes.

As governor, Romney vetoed a bill to fund human embryonic stem cell research. Regarding research on unimplanted embryos created for reproductive purposes, Romney stated in a 2007 debate, "It's fine for that to be allowed, to be legal. I won't use our government funds for that." His campaign website states, "Stem cell research is a great scientific frontier, and it must be pursued with respect and care... Quite simply, America cannot condone or participate in the creation of human life when the sole purpose of its creation is its sure destruction."

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

In Jan. 2012, the Obama administration's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a mandate that all employers – except for a limited group of religious employers – must provide health insurance coverage for contraception, sterilization and abortion causing drugs. Many religious institutions, including Catholic hospitals, K-12 schools, universities, and charities, are not exempt.

In the recently decided U.S. Supreme Court *Hosanna-Tabor* case, the Obama administration's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission argued against a Lutheran school's right to a ministerial exemption from the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. The exemption recognizes religious institutions' constitutional right to choose who is hired or retained to do religious work. The Supreme Court rejected the administration's argument 9-0.

In a Feb. 2012 op-ed, Romney wrote regarding the HHS mandate of his "strenuous objection to this liberty- and conscience-stifling regulation." He stated, "On day one ... I will eliminate the Obama administration rule that compels religious institutions to violate the tenets of their own faith."

Of the Supreme Court's *Hosanna-Tabor* decision, Romney said, "Fortunately that was struck down by the court 9-0. We are very fortunate [to have people] who are willing to stand up for religious tolerance and religious liberty and the First Amendment of this Constitution in this country."

These comments, policies and statements are snapshots from each candidate's public career and campaigns. The research was conducted using www.whitehouse.gov, www.barackobama.com and www.mittromney.com, as well as other websites. The platforms of the political parties can be viewed at www.democrats.org and www.gop.com. The underlined text indicates a hyperlink to the source. Go to www.pacatholic.org to view these links.

PRESIDENT OBAMA

FORMER GOVERNOR ROMNEY

HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR UNINSURED

Part of Obama's *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* seeks to increase access to health care for the previously uninsured and states that "no American can be discriminated against due to a pre-existing condition." The federal health care reform plan requires nearly everyone to purchase health insurance and imposes a tax for failure to comply.

As governor, Romney signed a state law creating health care coverage for all Massachusetts citizens. As president, Romney said he would issue "waivers to all fifty states" for the *Affordable Care Act* and then "work with Congress to repeal the full legislation as quickly as possible." He proposes to "pursue policies that give each state the power to craft a health care reform plan that is best for its own citizens." According to Romney's website, he believes this free market can "prevent discrimination against individuals with pre-existing conditions who maintain continuous coverage."

IMMIGRATION

The White House website states Obama's commitment to an immigration policy that includes: "responsibility by the federal government to secure our borders; accountability for businesses that break the law by undermining American workers and exploiting undocumented workers; strengthening our economic competitiveness by creating a legal immigration system that reflects our values and diverse needs; and responsibility from people who are living in the United States illegally."

The Obama administration's Department of Homeland Security issued a policy of deferred action for "certain young people who were brought to the United States as young children, do not present a risk to national security or public safety, and meet several key criteria."

According to Romney's campaign website, his plan to address immigration includes: "attract more highly skilled immigrants; make the temporary worker visa system functional; secure our borders, discourage illegal immigration and enforce the law; cut red tape that is keeping immediate families apart." His plan would also give "young illegal immigrants who were brought to the United States as children … the chance to become permanent residents, and eventually citizens, by serving honorably in the United States military" and would "address the 11 million illegal immigrants in America in a civil and resolute manner that respects the rule of law."

In response to the Obama administration's policy of deferred action, Romney said, "With regards to these kids who were brought in by their parents through no fault of their own, there needs to be a long-term solution so they know what their status is."

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

According to his White House website, Obama has "built a broad coalition to pressure Iran to abandon its nuclear program, including unprecedented sanctions by Congress, the UN Security Council, and a host of other nations and regional bodies." In April 2012, Obama said, "… the best way to resolve this issue is diplomatically, and [it is] my belief that we still have a window in which to resolve this conflict diplomatically. That window is closing, and Iran needs to take advantage of it. But it is absolutely the right thing to do for the U.S. government, working in concert with … the rest of the world community, to pursue this path."

According to his campaign website, Romney's strategy "will be to end Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapon, eliminate the threat of Iranian nuclear terrorism against the United States and our allies, and prevent nuclear proliferation across the Middle East." According to the website, his strategy includes four parts: a credible military option, a fifth round of tougher sanctions, support for the Iranian opposition, and a commitment to the on-time completion of a fully capable missile defense system.

MARRIAGE

In May 2012, Obama said,"I believe that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry." He said that marriage should be decided at the state level, where people are "arriving at different conclusions at different times." The *Defense of Marriage Act* (DOMA) is a law adopted by Congress that states that, for federal government purposes, only one man and one woman may be parties to a lawful marriage. In Feb. 2011, Obama said that his administration will no longer defend the DOMA in court.

In May 2012, Romney said, "I do not favor marriage between people of the same gender, and I do not favor civil unions if they are identical to marriage other than by name. My view is the domestic partnership benefits, hospital visitation rights, and the like are appropriate but that the others are not." According to his website, as president he would "not only appoint an attorney general who will defend the *Defense of Marriage Act* – a bipartisan law passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton – but he will also champion a Federal Marriage Amendment to the Constitution defining marriage as between one man and one woman."

POVERTY ASSISTANCE

A 2011 report from the Obama administration entitled "Creating Pathways to Opportunity" said of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly known as food stamps, "President Obama also enhanced and expanded the [program] to ensure that the 45 million individuals that participate each month continued to have the means to put food on the table. The Recovery Act investments in the SNAP program kept an additional 3.9 million people, including 1.7 million children, above the poverty line in 2010."

In a Jan. 2012 debate, Romney said of food stamps, "These programs, all these federal programs that are bundled to help people and make sure we have a safety net, need to be brought together and sent back to the states and let states that are closest to the needs of their own people craft the programs that are able to deal with their – the needs of those folks." He said food stamps were "certainly on the list" of programs. "Let's get the money back to the states the way the Constitution intended and let states care for their own people in the way they feel best."

PENNSYLVANIA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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