

# WORLD & NATION

## Need more information on issues, candidates?

By Patricia Zapor  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — So, you have read the newspapers, watched the debates, followed the TV news and still don't think you have enough information to make election choices based on issues that matter to you.

Especially for people who are trying to base their voting decisions on the church's principles of social justice and the value of human life, it can be frustrating to try to find the right kind of information amid campaign rhetoric.

Many dioceses publish nonpartisan voter guides that are distributed in parishes. If you have access to the Internet, a handful of sites can help you sort through the campaign hype.

First, every Catholic who wants to evaluate candidates from the perspective of church social teaching should start with a copy of the U.S. bishops' quadrennial guide to political issues.

"Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium" encourages Catholics to get involved in the 2000 elections and use moral principles and the care of the weak and needy as their guide.

It includes a list of 10 questions that Catholics should ask of any campaign, from "How will we protect the weakest in our midst — innocent, unborn children?" to "How will our nation resist what Pope John Paul II calls a growing 'culture of death?'"

Published last fall, it has been widely distributed through diocesan and parish networks, but is also available from several other sources. On the Internet, it can be found at: [www.ncbuscc.org/faithful-citizenship](http://www.ncbuscc.org/faithful-citizenship).

Individual copies of the document are being made available by many local parishes through their social justice ministry programs. It also can be ordered from bishops' Office for Publishing and Promotion Services, (800) 235-8722, at a cost of \$1.25 per copy.

By federal law, churches that operate as tax-exempt organizations are prohibited from endorsing candidates or otherwise acting in a partisan manner. So voter guides published by official Catholic organizations tend to be issue specific and fact-oriented.

The National Association of State Catholic Conference Directors maintains

a Web site with links to a dozen state conference pages. Some have only basic information, others have detailed responses to questionnaires sent to candidates for state offices. Its address is: <http://www.nasccd.org/StateConferences/Stconf.htm>.

The New York State Catholic Conference site is at [www.nyscatholicconference.org](http://www.nyscatholicconference.org), and features a legislative agenda, and list of permissible and prohibited church activities in regard to politics.

For a similar diocesan agenda, check [www.dor.org](http://www.dor.org), and click on Catholic Charities.

Catholics also can read up on the U.S. bishops' legislative priorities for Congress and compare them to candidates' positions. Check the bishops' conference site — [www.ncbuscc.org](http://www.ncbuscc.org) — under the following departments: Social Development and World Peace, Pro-Life Activities, Migration and Refugee Services and Government Liaison.

For unbiased information about where candidates stand on those issues, voters can check incumbents' records by looking up their votes on key legislation at Web sites maintained by the federal government.

For instance, the Library of Congress — <http://thomas.loc.gov/> — maintains listings of all House and Senate legislation and votes and has links to the Congressional Record, where you can read what your representatives said about particular bills.

The same information can be found in printed copies of the Congressional Record, available at many libraries or by calling a senator or representative's local office.

There are also some independent, non-governmental Internet sites that provide summaries of candidates' statements on a wide range of issues. Others will match up your responses to a questionnaire with the positions of the different candidates for president.

Those sites include:

- [www.issues2000.com](http://www.issues2000.com): A nonpartisan, not-for-profit site that summarizes what candidates for Congress and the White House have said on two dozen issues. Its material is compiled from speeches, newspapers, press releases and the Internet, with citations of where and when a comment was made. It can be searched by candidates' names or by issue.

## Vatican official says violence linked to violations of rights

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The ongoing conflicts in Israel and the Palestinian lands demonstrate how the violation of human rights unleashes violence, a Vatican official told the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

Archbishop Giuseppe Bertello, the Vatican's permanent observer to the commission, spoke during its Oct. 17-19 general session in Geneva. The Vatican released the text of his remarks Oct. 21.

"The events which have plunged the Middle East into mourning show with extreme seriousness the urgency of a continuing engagement on behalf of respect for human rights and remind us that their violation can unleash a series of violence, sometimes uncontrollable," Archbishop Bertello said.

The situation, he said, requires immediate political decisions aimed at establishing "a climate of trust between the peoples of a land which both designate as holy."

The root of the problem, the archbishop said, is "the absence of respect for certain basic rights," including the right of the Palestinians "to have a state and an independent government" as well as the

right of Israelis to security.

Both peoples, he said, have a right to "the free expression of their own culture and their own history."

Archbishop Bertello said the involvement and support of the international community can play an essential role in the peace process by ensuring that each side feels respected and recognized as partners in building a better world.

The violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories, which began in late September after an Israeli politician made a provocative visit to a Muslim holy site in Jerusalem, shows that any delay in recognizing the rights of the Palestinians can quickly degenerate into violence, he said.

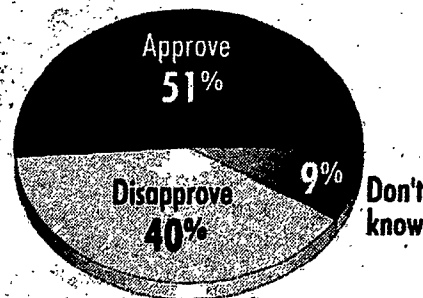
"These two peoples need to see their rights recognized: on the one side, the conditions necessary for a safe and peaceful life; on the other to have a land and the possibility of self-governance and of living in harmony with their neighbors," he said.

"The full respect of human rights is the only guarantee of a true coexistence which would allow all the peoples of the region to recover their dignity and honor," Archbishop Bertello said.

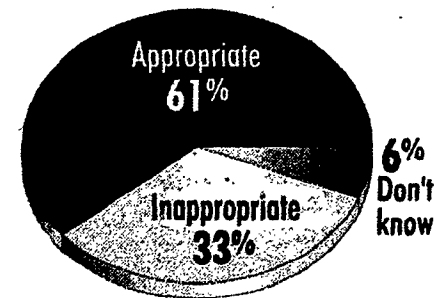


## Religion and Politics

How registered voters feel about pastors or community religious leaders offering guidance on political issues...



How registered voters feel about a candidate discussing his own religion and religious beliefs in a campaign...



Based on August random poll of 755 registered voters

Source: Newsweek Poll

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- [www.vote-smart.com](http://www.vote-smart.com): A site maintained by Project Vote Smart, which aims to make sure all candidates have a chance at having a voice in U.S. politics. One of its more interesting features is an online survey you can take to match up your opinions on a range of issues with those of the candidates for president and some state and local offices.

One drawback is that in its effort to be inclusive, Vote Smart incorporates responses from more than 160 would-be candidates for president, ranging from the Republican and Democratic nominees to people representing unfamiliar parties, such as the "Lettuce" party and the "National Barking Spider Resurgence Party."

- [www.bettervote.com](http://www.bettervote.com): Applies a "com-

patibility rating" to eight candidates for president, showing how compatible the candidates are to answers the user gives to 20 questions compiled by a Northwestern University political science professor.

- [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org): Maintained by the Center for Responsive Politics, the site uses information from candidates' Federal Election Commission filings to report on who receives money from whom. It presents information on which candidates receive contributions from which sources, as well as breakdowns of where different political action committees and other contributors spend their money.

It notes, for instance, how much money candidates from the two major parties received from pro-life groups and from groups supporting legalized abortion.

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