

Know the Positions of the Candidates for ATTORNEY GENERAL

“Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access those things required for human decency – food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life.”

~ Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, No. 49, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015

In keeping with its mission, the Virginia Catholic Conference aims to educate and inform Catholics about a wide range of issues. The information listed here was compiled as of Aug. 31, 2017, 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 do not represent a complete list of issues that may be of importance to Catholics. The Conference neither supports nor opposes any candidate for public office. The underlined text below indicates a hyperlink to the source. Go to www.vacatholic.org to view these links.



John D. Adams
Republican

Abortion:

Adams' [website](#) states, “I will never waver in my commitment to protect innocent life. ... The fact that abortion is now a constitutional right demonstrates the raw power of the Supreme Court. It also shows how important it is for Virginia to have an effective and principled lawyer to represent us before that Court. As your Attorney General, I will fight up to and at the Supreme Court to protect Virginians from further judicial overreach. In Virginia, I will fight to uphold strict standards for abortion clinics and ensure that all laws passed by the General Assembly, including those that protect the unborn, are defended in court when they come under attack.”

Death Penalty:

According to an [article](#) in *The Collegiate Times*, Adams told the College Republicans at Virginia Tech, “I support the death penalty. If you commit a felony and kill a victim, you deserve the death penalty.”

Educational Choice:

On his [website](#), Adams states, “Educated in public schools from kindergarten through law school, I understand the importance of a sound public education. I will fight to ensure that every student finds the same opportunities from our schools that I experienced. But, I also recognize the right and responsibility to educate our children lies foremost with parents – not politicians. Parents must be trusted to choose how best to educate their children.”



Mark R. Herring
Democrat

Abortion:

Herring's [website](#) states, “Attorney General Mark R. Herring ... has fought in court to defend a woman's access to comprehensive healthcare services including abortion and birth control. ... Herring helped defeat a 20-week abortion ban in the legislature with an official opinion that declared such a law would likely be struck down as unconstitutional, and as a state senator, he opposed legislation to restrict a woman's access to abortion.”

Death Penalty:

In 2016, Herring issued a [legal opinion](#) in support of amendments to [HB 815](#) that allowed the commonwealth to obtain execution drugs secretly from compounding pharmacies, thus helping to perpetuate the use of the death penalty in Virginia. In 2009, Herring [voted](#) for [HB 2358](#), which would have expanded use of the death penalty by redefining the “triggerman” rule.

Educational Choice:

During the 2012 General Assembly session, Herring [voted](#) against [SB 131](#). That legislation established the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits (EISTC) program, which provides a 65% state tax credit for donations that fund scholarships for income-eligible students to attend nonpublic K-12 schools.



John D. Adams

Republican

Environmental Responsibility:

During the Young Lawyer’s Committee of the Virginia State Bar Association [debate](#), Adams said, “Climate is changing and the temperature is increasing. That’s a fact. I think it’s a fact that human activity on earth is contributing to that. ... The magnitude of the increases and the import of what’s going to happen as a result of that ... are very complex questions that are, in my opinion, best left to experts. ... Your legislative body has to make determinations about how to manage all the conflicting interests. What I will do as attorney general, while always fighting for a clean and safe environment, is ... advise the General Assembly when they need legal advice on the steps they want to take to correct problems. ... And I will defend (the Department of Environmental Quality) when they get sued.”

Freedom of Religion:

On his [website](#), Adams states, “When the federal government tried to squelch the religious liberty of nuns and small business owners, I stood up for the freedoms of all Americans in the Supreme Court. I represented pro bono clients in *Hobby Lobby* and *Little Sisters of the Poor*, and I’ll fight whenever our religious freedom is under attack.” At the Young Lawyer’s Committee of the Virginia State Bar Association [debate](#), Adams stated, “I will defend the religious liberty of all Virginians, regardless of their faith.” At the debate, Adams also criticized the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals decision against a Trump administration executive order restricting travel and refugee resettlement. He did not say whether it was a religious liberty issue but said, “I am deeply concerned about a case where we now have courts second-guessing the commander-in-chief on questions related to national security.”

Immigration:

An ABC 8 Richmond [story](#) reported that Adams’ communications director issued a statement about Herring’s defense of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program which stated: “Mark Herring issued an opinion contrary to Virginia state law and grossly exceed (sic) his authority as Attorney General, allowing thousands of illegal aliens to pay in-state tuition at our college and universities. Herring relied on DACA – itself an executive overreach – in issuing his opinion so it is no surprise that he would want to see that federal executive action continued.”

Marriage:

Adams’ [website](#) states, “My personal belief is that marriage is between one man and one woman. Under our Constitution, Virginians – and citizens of all states – have every right to define marriage under their state laws as they see fit. ... The Supreme Court’s 5-4 decision forcing the states to redefine marriage was not based on anything in the Constitution, and it denied American citizens of the very right to self-government our Founding Fathers fought for. As your Attorney General, I would never disrespect the will of Virginians by refusing to defend perfectly valid Virginia Constitutional amendments in court.”

Mark R. Herring

Democrat

Environmental Responsibility:

At the Young Lawyer’s Committee of the Virginia State Bar Association [debate](#), Herring stated, “I think President Trump made the wrong decision in pulling out of the Paris climate agreement. ... I think climate change is real. ... That’s why I supported the Clean Power Plan, because it offered a way that we could begin to address our energy needs in a way that minimized ... carbon emissions. ... I issued an opinion that said the Air Pollution Control Board in Virginia had the authority to go ahead and implement steps that we could take, even without being a part of the Paris climate agreement.”

Freedom of Religion:

On his [website](#), Herring calls the *Hobby Lobby* case “infamous” and says he “fought ... to protect a woman’s access to the full range of reproductive health care services, including contraception, without interference from her boss.” At the Young Lawyer’s Committee of the Virginia State Bar Association [debate](#), Herring stated, “As the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals said, (the executive order restricting travel and refugee resettlement) was dripping with religious discrimination. People came to America to escape religious persecution. ... A religious test on entry to the United States ... violates the very core of who we are as a country and who we are as a state. Virginia is the home of religious freedom.”

Immigration:

Herring sent a [letter](#) to the president of the United States urging the continuation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which refrains from deporting youths who were brought to the United States as children, have no criminal records, and either serve in the military, attend school or are employed. The letter said, in part, “We urge you to affirm America’s values and tradition as a nation of immigrants and make clear that you will not only continue DACA, but that you will defend it.”

Marriage:

Herring’s [website](#) states, “Just 12 days into his term, Attorney General Mark R. Herring took the historic step of joining the fight for marriage equality, winning at the district court and appeals court before the United States Supreme Court let the decision stand, bringing marriage equality to the Commonwealth within 10 months of his taking office. Attorney General Herring is the first state attorney general to successfully argue that his state’s ban on marriage for same-sex couples should be struck down as unconstitutional.”

