



In keeping with its mission, the Virginia Catholic Conference aims to educate and inform Catholics about a wide range of issues. The information compiled here has been gathered from policies, public statements, official and campaign websites, and other resources, as of September 6th, to help voters form their consciences before voting in November. The issues that appear here do not represent a complete list of issues that may be of importance to Catholics. The VCC neither supports nor opposes any candidate for public office.

*“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*



Vice President  
**KAMALA HARRIS**

Former President  
**DONALD TRUMP**



## ABORTION

In a 2023 interview, Harris said, “We need to put into law the protections of Roe v. Wade. And that is about going back to where we were before the Dobbs decision.” Harris posted on social media in July 2024, “We who believe in reproductive freedom will stop Donald Trump’s extreme abortion bans—because we trust women to make decisions about their bodies.” In her address at the Democratic National Convention Harris said, “[W]hen Congress passes a bill to restore reproductive freedom, as president of the United States, I will proudly sign it into law.”

As president, Trump nominated three Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn Roe v. Wade. In an April 2024 video, Trump said, “My view is now that we have abortion where everyone wanted it from a legal standpoint, the states will determine by vote or legislation... Many states will be different.” He also said he would not sign a national abortion ban. In August 2024, Trump said he is voting no on Florida’s ballot Amendment 4, which would legalize abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy with no protections for the unborn baby.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Harris’ 2020 plan included legalizing marijuana, abolishing mandatory minimum sentences, ending the death penalty and solitary confinement, stopping private prisons, getting rid of cash bail, and leveraging the president’s clemency powers to reduce the number of people in federal prison. As a Senator, Harris introduced a bail reform bill with Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) in 2017 and voted in favor of the First Step Act in 2018.

In 2018, Trump signed into law the First Step Act, which, according to a Federal Bureau of Prisons overview, “was the culmination of a bi-partisan effort to improve criminal justice outcomes, as well as to reduce the size of the federal prison population while also creating mechanisms to maintain public safety.” During an Aug. 2020 White House briefing, Trump stated, “I’ll appoint more tough-on-crime prosecutors. ... When you enforce the law, order follows. And we need order.”

## DEATH PENALTY

During her 2020 Presidential bid, Harris stated she would seek to end the death penalty. In 2024, the Democratic National Committee dropped the call for an end to the death penalty from its platform.

The Trump administration presided over 13 federal executions. Trump has said that he supports expanding the death penalty to include convicted drug smugglers/traffickers.

## EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

No statements on Harris’ position on educational choice were found. The 2024 Democratic Party Platform states, “We oppose the use of private-school vouchers, tuition tax credits, opportunity scholarships, and other schemes that divert taxpayer-funded resources away from public education.”

Trump’s website states, “Republicans believe families should be empowered to choose the best Education for their children. We support Universal School Choice in every State in America. We will expand 529 Education Savings Accounts and support Homeschooling Families equally.”

## ENVIRONMENT

At a UN climate summit in 2023, Vice President Harris announced “a new \$3 billion pledge to the Green Climate Fund, which helps developing countries invest in resilience, clean energy, and nature-based solutions.”

In 2019, the Trump Administration began the process of withdrawing from the Paris agreement on climate change, an international accord to reduce global green-house gas emissions.

## GENDER ISSUES

In social media posts in June/July of 2023, Harris called on Congress to pass the Equality Act, which would add the new terms “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to the definition of “sex” in federal civil rights laws, and would exempt itself from the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. As a U.S. Senator, Harris also cosponsored the Equality Act in 2017.

In a Jan. 2023 video, Trump said, “I will ask Congress to pass a bill establishing that the only genders recognized by the United States government are male and female and they are assigned at birth. The bill will also make clear that Title IX prohibits men from participating in women’s sports and we will protect the rights of parents from being forced to allow their minor child to assume a gender which is new and an identity without the parents’ consent.”

## HEALTH CARE

At a March 2024 event, Harris said the Biden-Harris Administration “strengthened the Affordable Care Act so that, today, more Americans have healthcare coverage than ever before.”

In a Nov. 2023 social media post, Trump said, “Getting much better Healthcare than Obamacare for the American people will be a priority... It is not a matter of cost, it is a matter of HEALTH. America will have one of the best Healthcare Plans anywhere in the world. Right now it has one of the WORST!”



**VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS**

**FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP**

**IMMIGRATION/REFUGEES**

In 2021, as vice president, Harris began leading the Biden Administration's efforts to address the root causes of migration from countries in Central America, citing the need for a multilateral approach and encouraging private-sector investment. In her keynote at the Democratic National Convention, Harris pledged to bring back a bipartisan border package that would have dramatically limited the number of people allowed to claim asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border, while increasing resources for local communities receiving migrants.

At the July 2024 Republican National Convention, Trump promised to launch the "largest deportation operation in the history of the United States." In 2018, the Trump Administration implemented a "zero tolerance policy," an escalated effort to prosecute individuals entering the U.S. unlawfully, resulting in the separation of thousands of children from their parents, some of whom remain separated today. As president, Trump implemented policies such as the "Migrant Protection Protocols" and "Title 42," which severely limited access to asylum along the U.S.-Mexico border, and set the lowest refugee admissions ceiling since the resettlement program was created in 1980.

**IN VITRO FERTILIZATION (IVF)**

In a March 2024 social media post, Harris said, "President @JoeBiden and I will always protect access to IVF."

In an August 2024 speech, Trump said, "[U]nder the Trump administration, your government will pay for — or your insurance company will be mandated to pay for — all costs associated with IVF treatment."

**POVERTY**

In a proposal released in August 2024, Harris pledged to send Congress proposed federal limits on price increases for food producers and grocers. The proposal also called for creating a \$40 billion innovation fund for businesses building affordable rental housing units, expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit for some frontline workers, and reducing taxes on healthcare plans offered on the marketplace created by the Affordable Care Act. Harris also supports raising the federal minimum wage to \$15, supports expanding Social Security benefits by \$1,300 annually for those making less than \$16,000 a year, and has pushed for expanding SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) through the SNAP for KIDS Act.

Trump signed the Reducing Poverty in America by Promoting Opportunity and Economic Mobility executive order that calls on federal agencies to reevaluate welfare regulations. He favors mandatory work requirements for social welfare programs, and called for \$8.8 billion in affordable housing cuts in his fiscal year 2019 budget request. During his 2016 campaign, Trump suggested raising the federal minimum wage to at least \$10 but also expressed belief that the decision should rest with states. He has stated in the past that the federal government should not cut Social Security benefits. The Trump Administration proposed cuts to SNAP (formerly Food Stamps).

**RACIAL EQUITY**

In an op-ed Harris wrote, "People are protesting because Black people have been treated as less than human in America. ...[O]ur country has never fully addressed the systemic racism that has plagued our country since its earliest days. ...No longer can some wait on the sidelines, hoping for incremental change. In times like this, silence is complicity."

On his website, Trump said, "Joe Biden recently signed a very sinister executive order mandating that almost every federal department and agency establish a Marxist 'equity'... enforcement squad to implement a woke takeover of the entire federal government... Instead of treating everyone equally...'equity' means that benefits are awarded and policies are enforced based on skin color and sexual identity. We don't think that's a good idea. ...I will revoke this executive order on my first day back in office."

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

As Senator, Harris co-introduced the Do No Harm Act that states that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) "should not be interpreted to authorize an exemption from generally applicable law that imposes the religious views, habits, or practices of one party upon another." The measure was first introduced in 2017 in response to the Supreme Court's 2014 *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores* decision, which held that applying the HHS contraceptive mandate to closely held corporations violated RFRA.

Trump signed an Executive Order Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty to ensure that faith-based organizations would not be forced to compromise their religious beliefs as they serve their communities. This includes defending the rights of religious orders to care for the infirm and elderly without being fined out of existence for refusing to facilitate access to services that violate their faith. In June 2024 Trump said, "When I return to the White House, I will, once again, aggressively defend religious freedom in all of its forms."

**UKRAINE AND THE MIDDLE EAST**

In 2024 Harris said, "Russia's aggression is...an attack on international rules and norms and the principles embodied in the U.N. Charter. ...President Joe Biden and I will continue to support Ukraine and continue to impose costs on Russia." Regarding the Middle East, Harris said, "It is time for this war to end and end in a way where Israel is secure, all the hostages are released, the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza ends, and the Palestinian people can exercise their right to freedom, dignity, and self-determination."

In his 2024 Republican National Convention speech, Trump said, "I will end every single international crisis that the current administration has created, including the horrible war with Russia and Ukraine, which would have never happened if I was president. And the war caused by the attack on Israel, which would never have happened if I was president."

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