MICHIGAN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Tips for Researching Candidates

Voting as a faithful citizen not only involves conscience formation in accordance with Church teachings, but also evaluation of the candidates ahead of voting.

How can a faithful citizen engage in research of candidates? In Michigan, every registered voter can view the candidates for the upcoming election on his or her ballot via the Michigan Voter Information Center.

The following list provides a few suggestions for researching candidates. Keep in mind that no single source will provide the most complete picture—or even the most accurate picture—of a candidate's qualifications and his or her positions on the issues.

Candidate Websites

Most candidates will have a campaign website where they will list their positions on the issues. In many cases, candidates will clearly state what positions they favor or oppose on the most common policy issues. However, it can sometimes be difficult to get a clear answer on these positions depending on the amount of detail they provide. Also, the issues they list may not be categorized the same way the Church categorizes social issues.

Voting Records

For incumbent officials running for re-election, their voting record on legislation can provide a clearer picture of where they stand on the issues. For incumbent Michigan legislators, the site MichiganVotes allows voters to search for their lawmakers and view their votes on bills that came before the state Legislature. For Michigan's congressional members, the site voteview provides a similar service. The amount of information and what kind of information provided about the legislation can vary depending on the site and the bill.

Local News Sources

Local news outlets will sometimes profile candidates running for office as part of their campaign coverage. News outlets will also sometimes request candidates fill out questionnaires with their positions on the issues, which the outlet will then publish. Newspaper editorial boards also issue endorsements of certain candidates, which may provide more information. However, these endorsements will also include commentary from the editorial board staff on the candidate, which should be differentiated from objective facts about and positions held by the candidate.

Campaign Finance Records

Where political candidates draw their financial support from can factor into understanding the interests they hold. For state-based candidates, the Michigan Secretary of State provides an online platform that is searchable by the candidate's name. For Michigan candidates running for Congress, the Federal Election Commission provides similar search tools. In either case, reviewing the individuals and groups that contribute funding to a candidate can provide some context about where the candidate's interests lie.

Candidate Social Media

The U.S. bishops teach that Catholics should consider a candidate's commitments, character, and integrity when discerning their choices for voting. One way to evaluate this is by checking a candidate's social media profiles. Most candidates have active social media accounts on major platforms, and some may have both a personal account and a campaign account, as well as an account affiliated with their official office if he or she is already elected. Reviewing how a candidate conducts his or herself on social media could be helpful in assessing their character and integrity, in addition to any statements they may make regarding their positions on the issues.

For more on how Catholics can prepare to vote in the 2026 election, scan the QR code or visit micatholic.org/electionresources.