



Ohio Ballot Issues

November 2015

In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. Political rights are meant to be exercised for the common good of the nation and the human community.

There are three statewide issues on the November 3, 2015 ballot.

- **Issue 1:** A legislatively initiated *redistricting amendment* creating a bipartisan process for drawing legislative districts.
- **Issue 2:** A legislatively initiated *anti-monopoly amendment* prohibiting any petitioner from placing in the Ohio Constitution provisions that provide exclusive personal economic benefits.
- **Issue 3:** A voter-initiated *marijuana amendment* that legalizes marijuana for medicinal and personal use in Ohio.

Voters are encouraged to carefully and prayerfully study each of these issues. The Catholic Bishops of Ohio have taken a supportive position on Issues 1 & 2, while opposing Issue 3.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio offers these reflections as an aid to one's discernment process.

Reflection Questions

1. Will passage promote the value, dignity and health of the human person?
2. Will passage promote fundamental fairness, enhance political participation and accountability, and advance the common good of persons in the state, especially the poor and vulnerable?
3. Have I weighed the various arguments, for and against, and measured them in light of Catholic Social Teaching?
4. Is the issue needed and well conceived?
5. Does the issue reflect a change that should be addressed in the State Constitution (as opposed to an issue that ought to be addressed through the legislative process)?

Issue 1

Creates a bipartisan, public process for drawing legislative districts

- Strives to end the partisan process for drawing Ohio House and Senate districts, and replaces it with a bipartisan process with the goal of having district boundaries that are more compact and politically competitive.
- Ensures a transparent process by requiring public meetings, public display of maps, and a public letter explaining any plan the Commission adopts by a simple majority vote.
- Establishes the bipartisan Ohio Redistricting Commission, composed of 7 members including the Governor, the Auditor of State, the Secretary of State, and 4 members appointed by the majority and minority leaders of the General Assembly.
- Requires a bipartisan majority vote of 4 members in order to adopt any final district plan, and prevent deadlock by limiting the length of time any plan adopted without bipartisan support is effective.

Pro Argument (Adapted from the official ballot arguments)

Passage will create a fair, bipartisan, and transparent redistricting process that will make politicians accountable to the voters. www.yesforissue1.org

Con Argument (Adapted from the official ballot arguments)

The current process for drawing new legislative districts is adequate and has served Ohio well for many years. The proposed change will allow non-elected members to serve on the Commission. (There is no designated website promoting opposition)



Catholic Conference of Ohio Position

We appreciate that this issue was well debated in the Ohio General Assembly, and that it was placed on the ballot with strong bipartisan support.

Legislative districts should be fairly established, facilitate active citizen participation, assure effective accountability and accessibility to both voters and elected officials, and ensure the common good of all in society. Issue 1 provides a prudentially viable process for achieving these goals.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio support Issue 1.

Issue 2

Anti-monopoly amendment; protects the initiative process from being used for personal economic benefit

- Prohibits any petitioner from using the Ohio Constitution to grant a monopoly, oligopoly, or cartel for their exclusive financial benefit or to establish a preferential tax status.
- Prohibits any petitioner from using the Ohio Constitution to grant a commercial interest, right, or license that is not available to similarly situated persons or nonpublic entities.
- Requires the bipartisan Ohio Ballot Board to determine if a proposed constitutional amendment violates the prohibitions above, and if it does, present two separate ballot questions to voters. Both ballot questions must receive a majority yes vote before the proposed amendment could take effect.
- Prohibits from taking effect any proposed constitutional amendment appearing on the November 3, 2015 General Election ballot that creates a monopoly, oligopoly, or cartel for the sale, distribution, or other use of any federal Schedule I controlled substance (Issue 3).

Pro Argument (Adapted from the official ballot arguments)

Passage will prohibit special interests from amending the Constitution to guarantee financial profits for themselves or get special economic privileges that are not available to other similarly situated persons or entities.

Con Argument (Adapted from the official ballot arguments)

There is no reason to prevent anyone from amending the Constitution so long as the people support it by a majority vote.



Catholic Conference of Ohio Position

Economic justice calls for a balance between free market practices and public actions that protect the common good. Our teaching refers to this as pursuing a proper equilibrium between *subsidiarity* and *solidarity*. (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, #353, 354)

We appreciate that the Ohio General Assembly, with bipartisan support, placed this issue on the ballot. We agree with proponents that the Constitution should be used to protect fundamental rights of all individuals, not to guarantee financial profits for a select few.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio support Issue 2.

Issue 3

Production and sale of marijuana for personal and medicinal purposes

- Initially endows exclusive rights for commercial marijuana growth, cultivation, and extraction to ten self-designated landowners.
- Permits retail sale of marijuana and marijuana infused products at approximately 1,100 locations statewide.
- For persons aged 21 and older: Legalizes the purchase and personal use of up to one ounce of marijuana, and allows licensed persons to grow, possess and share homegrown marijuana in an amount not to exceed four flowering plants and eight ounces of usable marijuana.
- Authorizes the use of medical marijuana by any person, regardless of age, who has a certification for a debilitating medical condition.
- Creates special tax rates on gross revenue related to the production and sale of marijuana. Revenues from the tax go to local governments and the amendment-created state government agency called the marijuana control commission.

Pro Argument (Adapted from the official ballot arguments)

Passage will provide for personal choice, compassionate care, good jobs, well-funded local government services and a tightly regulated industry. www.yeson3ohio.com

Con Argument (Adapted from the official ballot arguments)

Passage cements in the Constitution a billion-dollar marijuana monopoly for a small group of wealthy investors, puts children at risk, and allows adults, 21 or older, to possess about 500 average-sized marijuana joints. www.noissue3.com



Catholic Conference of Ohio Position

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warns that the non-therapeutic use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life (#2291). Practicing the virtue of temperance disposes one to avoid every kind of excess, including drunkenness and substance abuse.

We do not believe that Issue 3 is well conceived. We agree with opponents of issue 3 that the scope of this amendment is overly broad. We worry about the negative consequences broad exposure to marijuana will have, especially on children. We strongly believe that many of the proposed legalization provisions do not belong in the State Constitution.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio are opposed to Issue 3.