

# Know the Positions of *The Presidential Candidates*

In keeping with its mission, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) aims to educate and inform Catholics about a wide range of issues concerning the right to life and the dignity of the human person, marriage and family, justice and peace, religious liberty, and others. PCC sent a questionnaire to both candidates seeking their opinions on specific questions. Neither campaign responded by the deadline. Therefore, the PCC compiled this information about the candidates from voting records, public statements and other resources to help Catholic voters inform their consciences before heading to the voting booth. The issues appear here in alphabetical order for information purposes only. PCC neither supports nor opposes any candidate for public office.



## DEMOCRAT

Illinois Senator  
**Barack Obama**



## REPUBLICAN

Arizona Senator  
**John McCain**



### ABORTION

Senator Barack Obama's campaign website says he is "a consistent champion of reproductive choice and will make preserving women's rights under *Roe v. Wade* a priority as President." In the Illinois State Senate, he opposed SB 1082 which would have granted that "a live child born as a result of an abortion shall be fully recognized as a human person and accorded immediate protection under the law." [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov) He also co-sponsored the federal Freedom of Choice Act, a bill that would make partial-birth abortion legal again, provide for taxpayer funding of abortion, and invalidate every state and federal limitation on abortion.\* [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)

"John McCain believes *Roe v. Wade* is a flawed decision that must be overturned, and as president he will nominate judges who understand that courts should not be in the business of legislating from the bench. Constitutional balance would be restored by the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, returning the abortion question to the individual states." He voted in favor of the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 and in favor of the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act of 2002 which grants protection to "every infant member of the species *homo sapiens* who is born alive at any stage of development" including those born as a result of induced abortion.\* [www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com)

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

"While the evidence tells me that the death penalty does little to deter crime, I believe there are some crimes—mass murder, the rape and murder of a child—so heinous that the community is justified in expressing the full measure of its outrage by meting out the ultimate punishment." *The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama, p. 58 October 1, 2006

Voted yes on federal legislation calling for the death penalty for the terrorist murder of U.S. nationals abroad (S. 1798 - October 26, 1989).\* Also voted yes on a Senate bill to limit death penalty appeals (S. 735 - April 17, 1996).\* (NOTE: Senator Obama was not in the U.S. Senate when this legislation was considered.) McCain criticized the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in June 2008 that ruled imposition of the death penalty for the rape of a child is unconstitutional. *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 2008

### EDUCATION/SCHOOL CHOICE

"Senator Obama has always been a critic of vouchers ... Throughout his career, he has voted against voucher proposals and voiced concern for siphoning off resources from our public schools." Obama's education agenda "does not include vouchers, in any shape or form." *Statement to Education Week*, February 20, 2008

Senator McCain, himself the father of private school students, told the National Urban League, "Everybody should have the same choice Cindy and I and Sen. Obama did." McCain stated that he favors vouchers that give parents more school choices. *Associated Press*, August 1, 2008

### HEALTHCARE

The Obama plan for reforming the health care system would "establish a new public insurance program, available to Americans who neither qualify for Medicaid or SCHIP nor have access to insurance through their employers, as well as to small businesses that want to offer insurance to their employees." [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)

The McCain health care reform plan would "use competition to improve the quality of health insurance with greater variety to match people's needs, lower prices, and portability." His campaign website says his plan offers families a direct refundable tax credit to offset the cost of insurance. Families will be able to choose the insurance provider. [www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com)

These comments, votes and statements are snapshots from each candidate's public career and campaign for president. The candidates also represent the platforms of their political parties, which may offer a broader perspective of the issues. To review the platforms, log on to:

[www.democrats.org/a/party/platform.html](http://www.democrats.org/a/party/platform.html)

[www.gopplatform2008.com](http://www.gopplatform2008.com)

\* Research on voting records was conducted with [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us), [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).



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For more information, contact PCC at PO Box 2835, Harrisburg, PA 17105 717-238-9613, [info@pacatholic.org](mailto:info@pacatholic.org).

## IMMIGRATION

Senator Obama supported legislation to provide immigrants an opportunity to remain in the country and earn citizenship by paying fines and back taxes, learning English, satisfying a work requirement, and passing a criminal background check. [www.obama.senate.gov/issues/immigration](http://www.obama.senate.gov/issues/immigration) Senator Obama also realizes “the need to increase the number of people we allow into the country legally to a level that keeps families together and meets the demand for jobs that employers cannot fill.” [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)

“Why not say to those undocumented workers who are working the jobs that the rest of us refuse, come out of the shadows ... pay a fine, stay employed, learn our language, pay your taxes, obey our laws, and earn the right to be an American.” *Statement on U.S. Senate floor regarding the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, May 25, 2006\** Senator McCain’s immigration program would “provide a system that is fair, humane, realistic, and ensures the rights of the individual and families will be protected (and) ensure that families are reunited.” [www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com)

## INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACE

“Immediately upon taking office, Obama will give his Secretary of Defense and military commanders a new mission in Iraq: ending the war. The removal of our troops will be responsible and phased, directed by military commanders on the ground and done in consultation with the Iraqi government. Military experts believe we can safely redeploy combat brigades from Iraq at a pace of 1 to 2 brigades a month that would remove them in 16 months.” [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)

“McCain believes it is strategically and morally essential for the United States to support the government of Iraq to become capable of governing itself and safeguarding its people. He strongly disagrees with those who advocate withdrawing American troops before that has occurred...The best way to secure long-term peace and security is to establish a stable, prosperous, and democratic state in Iraq that poses no threat to its neighbors and contributes to the defeat of terrorists. When Iraqi forces can safeguard their own country, American troops can return home.” [www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com)

## MARRIAGE

“Barack Obama supports full civil unions that give same-sex couples equal legal rights and privileges as married couples. Obama also believes we need to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and enact legislation that would ensure that the 1,100+ federal legal rights and benefits currently provided on the basis of marital status are extended to same-sex couples in civil unions and other legally-recognized unions.” [pride.barackobama.com](http://pride.barackobama.com) At the Saddleback Forum on August 16, 2008, he said, “I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman...I am not someone who promotes same-sex marriage, but I do believe in civil unions.” [www.rickwarrennews.com/transcript](http://www.rickwarrennews.com/transcript)

Senator McCain’s website says he believes the family is the “foundation” of society and “marriage is a union between one man and one woman...As with most issues vital to the preservation and health of civil society, the basic responsibility for preserving and strengthening the family should reside at the level of government closest to the people.” [www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com) At the Saddleback Forum on August 16, 2008, he said, “We have to recognize the unique status of marriage between man and woman (but) that doesn’t mean that people can’t enter into legal agreements.” [www.rickwarrennews.com/transcript](http://www.rickwarrennews.com/transcript)

## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

At a speech to the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Senator Obama said, “the first thing I’d do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act.” July 17, 2007, [www.imoneinamillion.com](http://www.imoneinamillion.com) (*One Million for Planned Parenthood*) The National Organization of Women website says the bill “would sweep away hundreds of anti-abortion laws” including “conscience” laws that allow health care providers to decline to provide or perform abortions. [www.now.org](http://www.now.org) The bill (S. 1173) would invalidate every state and federal limitation on abortion.\*

Senator McCain voted in favor of an amendment to the Public Health Services Act in 1996 that prohibits governmental discrimination in the training and licensing of health professionals on the basis of their refusal “to undergo training in the performance of induced abortions, to provide such training, to perform such abortions, or to provide referrals for such training or such abortions.”\* (NOTE: Senator Obama was not in the U.S. Senate when this legislation was considered.)

## STEM CELL RESEARCH

Senator Obama voted for the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005—a bill that would have allowed federal funding for embryonic stem cell research.\* He co-sponsored the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007, which would allow research on cells derived from embryos donated from in vitro fertilization clinics.\* His website says, the “embryos must be deemed in excess and created solely for the purpose of fertility treatment.” [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)

Senator McCain voted in favor of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act in 2005, a bill that would have allowed federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. In 2007 he voted to allow research on cells derived from embryos donated from in vitro fertilization clinics.\* His website says he supports adult stem cell research, but is opposed to embryonic stem cell research on cloned embryos and the deliberate creation of embryos for research. [www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com)

\* Research on voting records was conducted with [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us), [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).