

# MARYLAND VOTE 2026

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## MARYLAND PRIMARY ELECTION CANDIDATE SURVEY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8

### ABOUT THE SURVEYS

The Maryland Catholic Conference surveyed candidates seeking office in the General Assembly (as well as Governor and Congress; see separate documents; see [mdcatholic.org/elections](https://mdcatholic.org/elections)).

Candidates could choose “agree” or “disagree” and/or provide a statement for these questions:

**POVERTY.** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other similar initiatives provide funding for millions of poor Americans who cannot afford to adequately feed themselves or their families. Congress should oppose restrictions on SNAP that prevent the most vulnerable from receiving these benefits.

**ABORTION.** Congress should enact legislation permanently banning the use of taxpayer funding for abortion and banning abortion in federal healthcare facilities or from being performed by federal employees.

**IMMIGRATION.** Congress should pass legislation to reform immigration policy to protect children and young people, such as the Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act, to provide humanitarian protection to abused, neglected or abandoned youth.

**EDUCATION.** Congress should enact legislation, such as the Educational Choice for Children Act, which empowers parents in every state with expanded educational options through federal tax credit incentives that will fund scholarships for K-12 students, including those attending Catholic schools.

**ENVIRONMENT.** Congress should pass legislation to encourage the responsible stewardship of the environment and its natural resources by protecting and promoting our national parks and wildlife preserves.

**FAMILY.** Congress should enact legislation to support families, mothers and children, such as increasing and extending the child tax credit to include unborn children, extending the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and providing increased funding for childcare programs and foster programs.

**CONSCIENCE PROTECTIONS.** Congress should pass legislation to ensure religious freedom and rights of conscience for healthcare workers and other government employees.

### WHY SHOULD MARYLAND CATHOLICS VOTE FOR YOU?



*The Maryland Catholic Conference does not endorse or oppose any candidate, under any circumstance, and no inference of endorsement or opposition should be concluded as a result of the information provided here.*

# MARYLAND VOTE 2026

## MARYLAND PRIMARY ELECTION CANDIDATE SURVEY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8

VOTE JUNE 11-18 (early voting) | JUNE 23 (Election Day)

These positions and statements provided by candidates to a Maryland Catholic Conference survey, plus materials at [mdcatholic.org/elections](https://mdcatholic.org/elections), are resources to help you inform your conscience before voting. **Please see the separate gubernatorial and General Assembly surveys.**

The Maryland Catholic Conference does not endorse or oppose any candidate, under any circumstance, and no inference of endorsement or opposition should be concluded as a result of the information provided here.

*Candidate statements follow grid*

	Poverty	Abortion	Immigration	Education	Environment	Family	Conscience Protections	Addl. Comments
<b>DEMOCRATS</b>								
J. D. Kumar	●	X	●	●	●	●	●	Yes
Stephen Alan Leon	●	X	●	●	●	●	●	Yes
Jamie Raskin								
Boris Kabel Velasquez	●	X	●	X	●	●	X	Yes
<b>REPUBLICANS</b>								
Donald L. Lech	●	●	X	●	●	●	●	Yes
Anita Mpambara Cox	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Yes
Cheryl Riley								
Michael Yadeta	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Yes

Green = agree | Red = disagree | Blank = no response

Candidate statements follow. Candidates may not have responded to every question.

1. **POVERTY.** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other similar initiatives provide funding for millions of poor Americans who cannot afford to adequately feed themselves or their families. Congress should oppose restrictions on SNAP that prevent the most vulnerable from receiving these benefits.

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### Democrats

J. D. Kumar	Yes, I absolutely agree. So much food is wasted everyday. Nobody should go hungry anywhere including those that live in our USA, the most advanced economy. However, we must make efforts for people to be self sufficient, help them find and return to work, do this Empathetically and Proactively. Welfare spiral causes low self esteem, mental, physical health problems, isolation, fear, dependency. I'm advocating Forever Rent Stabilization, no evictions, shelter as a basic right. I'm negotiating a weekly \$30 grocery and home items package. I have proposed medicaid as a third voluntary fica tax.
Stephen Alan Leon	The budget can still be balanced while providing SNAP.
Boris Kabel Velasquez	I strongly agree. I was raised on the example of Saint Romero, who taught that the hungry cannot wait. SNAP feeds 42 million Americans. The majority of recipients who can work do work. They are not idle. They are underpaid. The moral failure is not that they receive help. It is that full-time work does not pay enough to feed a family. Restricting SNAP does not solve poverty. It adds hunger to it. Congress should protect these benefits and build an economy where fewer families need them. (see website for full answer)

#### Republicans

Donald L. Lech	I agree that Congress should not, in any way, propose restrictions that might prevent the most vulnerable legal American Marylanders from receiving SNAP benefits. However, since SNAP benefits originate from dollars from the US tax payer, an accounting of who gets the US tax payer dollars through SNAP should be kept showing that US tax payer dollars via SNAP are being provided to the most vulnerable legal US citizens from Maryland. The SNAP program, provided out of the goodness of US tax payer's kindness, should not leave legal Marylanders without benefits in favor of illegal aliens.
Anita Mpambara Cox	I know that a meal ties a human being to possibility. Feeding the vulnerable is close to my heart. For 18 years, through my nonprofit, I have fed children in schools in rural Africa and seen the difference that that very basic human need makes when met. The vulnerable must have access to SNAP and receive those benefits without interference. The program must be protected to maintain its integrity — every dollar lost to fraud is stolen from someone who genuinely needs it.
Michael Yadeta	Caring for those in need is a fundamental moral responsibility. Programs like SNAP play an important role in ensuring that individuals and families have access to basic necessities, especially during difficult times. I believe we are called not only to provide assistance, but also to create opportunities for individuals to achieve dignity through work. By combining support with pathways to employment and self-reliance, we can uplift families and strengthen our communities.

2. **ABORTION.** Congress should enact legislation permanently banning the use of taxpayer funding for abortion and banning abortion in federal healthcare facilities or from being performed by federal employees.

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### Democrats

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J. D. Kumar

No, until we have a robust, wide area available, cost effective healthcare system. I'm personally against abortion, but, I serve at the pleasure of my constituents. Abortion should be a decision between couples, ultimately the child bearing woman, final decision for her. Abortion should not be used as a replacement for reproduction control, so we do our best to advise, protect. I like physically, mentally strong, empowered women, my associations always like this. The Supreme Court ruled to let states decide. The State of Maryland the Reproductive Freedom Amendment was passed in 2024 elections.

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Stephen Alan Leon

Abortion should be protected within 3-months at the Federal level. Like wages, further determination ought to be for an individual State to determine.

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Boris Kabel Velasquez

I respectfully disagree. The Creator gave us free will, and legislation that removes a woman's choice in the wake of rape, incest, or medical emergencies like Adriana Smith's does not honor that gift. It compounds suffering and risks driving the afflicted from their union with the Creator. Federal abortion expenditures amount to about 0.04 cents per taxpayer per year. Meanwhile, the concentration of \$80 trillion in the hands of the few contributes to more than 880,000 preventable deaths annually through poverty, lack of healthcare, and despair. That is where our moral attention belongs.

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#### Republicans

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Donald L. Lech

I agree that the majority of abortions should not be performed using tax payer funding. While I am not in favor of abortion, I believe abortion should be considered by the prospective mother as a viable option in cases where the mother's life is in jeopardy or if rape is involved and only if the mother wants the abortion. Tax payer dollars should be used in rare instances to save an impoverished woman's life one time, to help mitigate an unsafe abortion procedure that could kill the woman. Typically, tax payer dollars should not be used, and is a private matter for the mother or the couple.

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Anita Mpambara Cox

Taxpayers themselves are divided on abortion — compelling all of them to fund it through federal dollars is neither democratic nor fair. Federal funding should reflect majority consensus. Abortion has never achieved that consensus legislatively — it was decided through courts, not Congress. I hear this consistently from constituents in CD8 who do not want their tax dollars funding procedures that violate their deepest convictions. When Congress cannot pass it, the federal purse should not fund it.

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Michael Yadeta

I believe that every human life has inherent dignity and should be protected. I support policies that limit the use of taxpayer funding for abortion and ensure that federal resources are used in a way that respects the value of life. At the same time, I recognize that this is a deeply personal and complex issue. I believe we must also focus on supporting women, families, and children by expanding access to healthcare, prenatal support, and resources that make it easier to choose life.

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3. **IMMIGRATION.** Congress should pass legislation to reform immigration policy to protect children and young people, such as the Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act, to provide humanitarian protection to abused, neglected or abandoned youth.

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### Democrats

J. D. Kumar	PVIYA SIJS has complications because is combined with Employment Based Visas. There can be fraud here also. I have proposed an Established Immigrant Migrant (Now Merit) Communities (EIMC) local Residency Status and Safety card and Integrity Citizen Committees instead of Judges Courts to expedite refugee decisions, etc. Also a 5 (Work Permit), 10 (Residency), 15 (Citizenship) years legalization proposal for EIMC here prior to POTUS 2025. I commend the Catholic Church for leading on these humanitarian issues. Also a Global Board of Empathy, another initiative, "To Form a More Utopian Society."
Stephen Alan Leon	I have a three point plan for this: Offset Green Premium, Gross Domestic Product Protection Act, Continental Socioeconomic Improvement
Boris Kabel Velasquez	I strongly agree. St. Romero gave his life defending the vulnerable, & the children this legislation seeks to protect are among the most vulnerable people on earth. Abused, neglected, and abandoned youth who arrive at our border aren't a policy problem. They're children, and how we treat them reveals who we are. My family's roots trace to El Salvador, where St. Romero's legacy lives. I carry that obligation personally. Congress must pass legislation that protects these young people, because a nation that turns its back on a suffering child has lost its moral standing to lead on anything else.

#### Republicans

Donald L. Lech	Yes, it is Congress's responsibility to pass laws regarding Immigration policy. Unfortunately, the current immigration laws that are on the books and have been passed by Congress are not being followed, and legal American citizens are being killed by illegal aliens. It is not right that children are being ripped away from their parents in many South American countries. Breaking the law to start your life in a new country is unacceptable. There are ways that children could benefit from being exposed to the US, but ripping them away from their parents and placed in foster care is not the answer.
Anita Mpambara Cox	As a mother of children for whom I was a stay-at-home mother and did some homeschooling, protecting children is something I care deeply about. Children are God's gift. Abuse, neglect and abandonment of vulnerable children is disturbing. Any legislation that protects them should be supported. The Act cited is tied to a visa issue. As a former U.S. State Department official that spent years overseas deciding who enters and who doesn't, I would have a better handle on negotiating this type of legislation to ensure it passes. It requires dialogue within the GOP conference which is lacking.
Michael Yadeta	At the same time, I believe immigration policy should be fair, orderly, and uphold the rule of law. We must ensure that our immigration system is both compassionate and responsible, protecting vulnerable populations while maintaining secure and well-managed borders. My approach is to support policies that safeguard children, strengthen families, and promote stability, while also advancing long-term solutions that improve the effectiveness and integrity of our immigration system

4. **EDUCATION.** Congress should enact legislation, such as the Educational Choice for Children Act, which empowers parents in every state with expanded educational options through federal tax credit incentives that will fund scholarships for K-12 students, including those attending Catholic schools.

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### Democrats

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J. D. Kumar

Yes, absolutely. MCPS wastes \$Billions, not world class schools, not producing decency, integrity model society citizens, just mediocrity. MCPS students are indoctrinated on Religious, Ethnic and Jealous Hate (REAJH). MCPS creates Problematic Callous Hate Groups (PCHG). There is not enough discipline, too much chaos and disrespect towards elders, etc. A faith based learning system can solve all this. So much knowledge, truths and wisdom can be imparted from our scriptures that are written over millenias. So, we have to implement a better teaching, student results outcomes, success system.

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Boris Kabel Velasquez

I respectfully disagree. Saint Romero stood with the poor, not systems that separate privileged from marginalized. Diverting funds to private schools abandons the poorest children in underfunded classrooms and the teachers who serve them. Once the wall between public funding and religious education falls, it falls for every faith, including those this Conference would find objectionable. The answer is to fund public schools fully and fight together so every child receives the education our Creator intended.

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#### Republicans

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Donald L. Lech

I agree that public schools as well as some private schools have mostly become indoctrination centers, and do not teach the three 'Rs' to children. The education system is failing children today, and parents are being left out of decisions that will affect their children's life forever! Parents should be told what EXACTLY will be taught to THEIR children, and parents should be able to opt their children out of any material that parents believe is inappropriate for their children. Federal tax credit incentives for scholarships should be given to any school that teaches appropriate materials.

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Anita Mpambara Cox

School choice is a conviction I held long before it became law. As a mother who attended faith-based schools and chose the same for my children, I stood with Montgomery County parents outside the Board of Education and the Supreme Court during Mahmoud v. Taylor. Many couldn't afford private school. ECCA — now law under H.R.1 — removes that barrier beginning 2027. Congress must build on this. I will support the Student Empowerment Act, the ACE Act, and the Universal School Choice Act — legislation currently in Congress to expand options for every family.

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Michael Yadeta

Programs that expand school choice, including scholarship opportunities, can help families access better educational outcomes, especially in underserved communities. This includes support for public, private, and faith-based schools that play an important role in educating students and strengthening communities. At the same time, I believe we must continue to invest in improving public education and ensuring that all schools provide high-quality instruction. My approach is to support policies that expand opportunity, strengthen families, and promote excellence across all forms of education.

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5. **ENVIRONMENT.** Congress should pass legislation to encourage the responsible stewardship of the environment and its natural resources by protecting and promoting our national parks and wildlife preserves.

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

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**Democrats**

J. D. Kumar	President Teddy Roosevelt did so much on this subject designating millions of acres for preservation, national parks, etc. He was one of our best presidents, one of my favorites. He built the Panama Canal, awesome for the environment, less use of fuel, etc. So, obviously and absolutely yes. We must do everything smartly, pragmatically and reasonably and this includes contingencies for any national security issues, etc. I'm exponentially more Green than the Green Party. No joke on this. I recycle everything at a very micro detail method and I also set up a company to recycle industrial waste.
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Stephen Alan Leon	I have a three point plan for this: Offset Green Premium, Gross Domestic Product Protection Act, Continental Socioeconomic Improvement
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Boris Kabel Velasquez	I strongly agree. My Indigenous ancestors were stewards of this land for thousands of years before it had a name. Laudato Si' calls us to care for our common home and reminds us that environmental harm falls hardest on the poor. These are the same truth spoken in different traditions across thousands of years. Our national parks and wildlife preserves are not luxuries. They are the Creator's gift held in trust for every generation. Congress must protect them, and must go further by addressing the pollution, extraction, and neglect that threaten the communities least able to defend themselves.
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**Republicans**

Donald L. Lech	I agree that our national parks should be protected. However, that protection should not come at the expense of giving in to the environmental extremists that DO NOT have the best plans for our resources. For example, in Maryland, there are many areas that are overgrown with vines that are killing the trees and bushes and natural beauty, but the park service does not clean up areas, because the environmental extremists prefer having overgrown areas that look terrible and are slowly killing the natural flora that should be protected. This needs to be well thought out before a decision is made.
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Anita Mpambara Cox	As a U.S. Economics Officer in India, I witnessed firsthand how environmental degradation devastates communities, economies and futures. Responsible stewardship of our natural resources is not a partisan issue — it is a generational obligation. Our national parks and wildlife preserves are among America's greatest treasures, attracting millions of visitors and billions in economic activity annually. Congress must protect and expand them. I agree and will support legislation that ensures we leave this earth better than we found it.
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Michael Yadeta	At the same time, I believe environmental policies should be balanced, ensuring that conservation efforts are aligned with economic growth and community needs. We should promote sustainable practices, support conservation initiatives, and invest in solutions that protect natural resources while allowing responsible development. My approach is to encourage stewardship, accountability, and long-term sustainability—protecting our environment while supporting strong communities and economic opportunity.
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6. **FAMILY.** Congress should enact legislation to support families, mothers and children, such as increasing and extending the child tax credit to include unborn children, extending the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and providing increased funding for childcare programs and foster programs.

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### Democrats

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J. D. Kumar

Yes, obviously, nobody should go hungry, homeless. We must encourage the family unit. In congress I will legislate for USA Americans (Natives, Nativists, British Colonized, Colonial Europe America Black, White, 20th century lineage) to have large families, provide every benefit possible, ensure against Civilization Erasure with Free Child Care, Pre K, Faith Based Schools, Scholarships, Low Mortgage Cost Homes, Paid Leave, Forever Rent Stabilization, etc. For 21st century immigrants we will ensure they can get work opportunities, establish themselves thrive, be successful large families also.

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Boris Kabel Velasquez

I strongly agree. Saint Romero taught that the Church must be the voice of those who have no voice, and no one is more voiceless than a mother who cannot afford to feed her children or a child trapped in a failing foster system. I support extending the child tax credit to begin during pregnancy because mothers deserve support from the moment they carry new life. I support extending WIC and increasing funding for childcare and foster programs. A nation that claims to value families must invest in them, not just in words but in the material support that turns survival into dignity.

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#### Republicans

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Donald L. Lech

Yes, Congress should support families, single-parent mothers and children. However, you cannot have a child tax credit for an unborn child. This is not logical! Child tax credits should help families with their children, and if a family does not have a physical child, how can you legitimately help support a child that is not yet been born. An accounting of all funds going to support child tax credits should be recorded to ensure that the most needy are being helped and supported. Finally, child tax credit funds should not leave legal Marylanders without benefits in favor of illegal aliens.

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Anita Mpambara Cox

Family First is not just my campaign platform — it is how I have lived my life. As a mother who homeschooled my children and has spent 18 years feeding children in rural Africa through my nonprofit, I understand what families need to thrive. I strongly support expanding the child tax credit to include unborn children, extending WIC, and increasing funding for childcare and foster programs. Strong families are the foundation of a strong nation. Congress must invest in them without hesitation.

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Michael Yadeta

Programs such as the Child Tax Credit, WIC, childcare support, and foster care services play an important role in supporting families, particularly during critical stages of development. Expanding access to these resources can help reduce financial stress, improve child well-being, and promote long-term stability. At the same time, I believe these programs should be designed to encourage family stability, personal responsibility, and economic independence. My approach is to support policies that uplift families, protect children, and create pathways for long-term success.

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7. **CONSCIENCE PROTECTIONS.** Congress should pass legislation to ensure religious freedom and rights of conscience for healthcare workers and other government employees.

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### Democrats

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J. D. Kumar

Yes. There are so many laws in place for this already. The Church Amendments. The Public Health Service Acts. The Balanced Budget Acts. The Weldon Amendment and ACA Section 1553 also has protections for healthcare workers, entities that object to perform certain procedures, etc. due to religion or moral reasons. This has to be examined in detail for a response regarding any new legislation, but, there are many laws in place already. The problem here is having access to alternatives whether as a patient or a conscientious objecting worker, healthcare entity.

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Boris Kabel Velasquez

I respectfully disagree with broad conscience legislation. Saint Romero's conscience drove him toward the suffering, not away from them. Conscience in his tradition is a mandate to serve, not a shield to refuse. Yet legislation broad enough to protect one faith's conscience also protects every faith's conscience, including those who would refuse care to Catholics themselves. Adriana Smith's family learned what happens when personal belief overrides medical duty. The answer is not to legislate refusal. It is to build a health system where compassion and competence are the standard for all.

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#### Republicans

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Donald L. Lech

Religious freedom is a major point found in our Declaration of Independence and is a must allowed for every legal citizen of this great country! Rights of conscience appear to have been thrown out in the prior Biden Administration, who went after such groups as the 'Little Sisters of the Poor.' Congress really shouldn't have to pass anything, since this is written in our Declaration of Independence and is considered the law. It appears that the prior administration has used DOJ to try to destroy the laws and to hold a large bias against religious freedom. This should already have been stopped.

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Anita Mpambara Cox

FAMILY FIRŠT — my platform — is rooted in the belief that families must be free to live, work and worship according to their values without government interference. On March 16 I attended the White House Religious Liberty Commission's sixth hearing at the Museum of the Bible and heard physicians, counselors and others testify about losing their livelihoods for following their conscience. No American should choose between faith and profession. Healthcare workers and government employees must never be forced to violate their convictions. I strongly agree.

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Michael Yadeta

I support protecting religious freedom and the rights of conscience, which are fundamental principles of our nation. Individuals, including healthcare workers and public servants, should not be forced to act in ways that violate their deeply held beliefs. My approach is to protect constitutional freedoms while encouraging solutions that respect diversity, uphold dignity, and serve the needs of all communities.

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## 8. WHY SHOULD MARYLAND CATHOLICS VOTE FOR YOU?

### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

#### Democrats

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J. D. Kumar

I'm very religious, believer, love the Catholic Church. The Vatican is sacred, must protect by funding \$Billions like State of Israel, military in South Korea, etc. I'm enamored with the solemnity, liturgical traditions. A refugee sanctuary here since President RWR. Mother Teresa, a saint, helped the poor in my Home-Country India. I grew up with the Multi-Lingual Pope JP the 2nd here in my Home-Nation USA, was in awe of him, in Solidarity with him, a beautiful, kind, perfect representation pontiff. Pope Francis, others also beautiful, formidable. I will be your historically best representative.

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Stephen Alan Leon

Although I was raised Catholic, my admiration remains for JFK's statement of: "I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me."

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Boris Kabel Velasquez

I follow Saint Romero, who taught that the Church must be the voice of those who have no voice. I built my life on that teaching. I have always served, first as a Marine and in national security ever since. I have no PAC, no Super PAC, because they are not the people. I reject donations because I do not want to take from the people. I want to give. I fight for the poor, for workers, for families, for the sick, and for the child who has no one. I will not always agree with the Conference, but I will always love you. That is what Saint Romero taught me. That is why I am running for Congress.

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#### Republicans

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Donald L. Lech

I am a Roman Catholic, but more importantly, I believe in religious freedom as it is spelled out in our Declaration of Independence. I do not twist meanings to paint a false picture, and will always say what is on my mind. In addition, I do not have a closed mind; I listen to arguments, and then weigh them and make up my own mind. I will not be controlled by any groups, but would do what is best for legal citizens of the state of Maryland and of this great nation, the United States of America!

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Anita Mpambara Cox

Because I share the values of Maryland Catholics — and I have lived them. I attended Catholic school, as did my children. When Montgomery County treated parents' faith like rubbish, I stood with them — going to stand outside the Supreme Court. The White House Religious Liberty Commission hearings gave me valuable insight and meeting those giving testimony in person gave me more resolve. A vote for me in the primary (June 23) sends me to the General to face someone who called giving parents rights over their children's education "cruel." My experience and work equip me to meet that moment.

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Michael Yadeta

Maryland Catholics should consider supporting my candidacy because I am committed to serving with integrity, compassion, and a focus on strengthening families and communities. My work has always been centered on creating opportunities—whether through infrastructure development, workforce training, or community engagement and ensuring that people have access to the resources they need to succeed. My goal is to serve all constituents with fairness, respect, and a commitment to improving quality of life.

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