

MARYLAND VOTE 2026

MARYLAND PRIMARY ELECTION CANDIDATE SURVEY GENERAL ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 31

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

ABOUT THE SURVEYS

The Maryland Catholic Conference surveyed candidates seeking office in the General Assembly (as well as Governor and Congress; see separate documents).

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

ASSISTANCE TO THE POOR. Funding in Maryland’s budget should be maintained, and when necessary, increased to provide low-income residents access to basic necessities, such as food, housing and healthcare.

ENVIRONMENT. The State of Maryland should support initiatives such as tax credits or grant programs to encourage Maryland residents, businesses and non-profits to reduce their carbon footprint.

K-12 EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS. The State of Maryland should continue to expand existing funding to provide scholarships for low-income students who wish to attend the K-12 nonpublic school best suited for their educational needs.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE/MEDICAL AID IN DYING. In 1999, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation making it a felony for an individual to assist in another individual’s suicide. Maryland should uphold the law in its current form and reject legislation to legalize the practice of physician-assisted suicide/medical aid in dying.

WHY SHOULD MARYLAND CATHOLICS VOTE FOR YOU?

We encourage you to use these materials and the resources at mdcatholic.org/elections, to help you inform your conscience before voting.

Please note: 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.



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

Positions and statements provided by candidates to a Maryland Catholic Conference survey, plus materials at mdcatholic.org/elections, are resources to help you inform your conscience before voting. **Please also see the Governor and U.S. Congress surveys.**

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Candidate statements follow grid

DISTRICT 31			Poverty	Environment	Education	Against Physician Assisted Suicide	Addl. Comments
STATE SENATE CANDIDATES							
31	D	Brent Mulrooney					
31	R	Nicholaus Kipke	●	X	●	●	Yes
STATE DELEGATE CANDIDATES							
31	D	Joan Barone Cole	●	●	●		Yes
31	D	Heidi Buchanan Schmidt	●	●	X	●	Yes
31	D	Ryan Kelly Shaban					
31	R	LaToya Marie Caldwell-Nkongolo	●	●	●	●	Yes
31	R	Brian A. Chisholm	●	X	●	●	
31	R	Mike Jacobs					

D = Democrat | R= Republican : Green = agree | Red = disagree | Blank = no response



1. ASSISTANCE TO THE POOR

Funding in Maryland’s budget should be maintained, and when necessary, increased to provide low-income residents access to basic necessities, such as food, housing and healthcare.

DISTRICT 31 SENATE CANDIDATES

31	R	Nicholaus Kipke	<p>I agree with support for the needy but I believe the state needs to do a better job ensuring that those dollars are being used properly. Audits and whistleblowers in recent years have exposed waste and corruption in some nonprofits receiving grants. The legislature should enact laws that allow nonprofits who receive public funding to receive greater auditing and oversight of how funds are used to protect against fraud and abuse. Furthermore, we should look at any of these programs as a safety net, not complicit with unnecessary government dependency.</p>
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DISTRICT 31 DELEGATE CANDIDATES

31	D	Joan Barone Cole	<p>I have been an active member of the St. Vincent de Paul ministry at St. Bernadette and Christ the King parishes. As part of our faith development, we visit neighbors who are in need of assistance due to the risk of eviction or of utility cut-off. We pray with them and provide them with resources that can help, as well as financial assistance in most cases. This ministry has enlightened me to the hardships and struggles that low-income residents face. They deserve our compassion and assistance whenever we can provide it. I have also been involved with the Life, Justice & Peace ministry.</p>
31	D	Heidi Buchanan Schmidt	<p>We have a moral obligation to ensure that all members of our community can live dignified lives with access to basic necessities, including food, housing, clean water, and healthcare.</p>

2. ENVIRONMENT

The State of Maryland should support initiatives such as tax credits or grant programs to encourage Maryland residents, businesses and non-profits to reduce their carbon footprint.

DISTRICT 31 SENATE CANDIDATES

31	R	Nicholaus Kipke	I believe the grants and tax credits should be better focused on public health and the environment, not exclusive to carbon footprint. As the stewards of the Chesapeake Bay I believe we would be doing better in supporting the environment by reducing runoff and investing in infrastructure upgrades to prevent sewage from annually being dumped into our rivers like we recently saw in the Potomac River and regularly see in the Patapsco River.
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DISTRICT 31 DELEGATE CANDIDATES

31	D	Joan Barone Cole	This planet that we call Earth is God's gift to us. We are called to take care of it and protect it so that its beauty and our human race can flourish for generations. The best way to protect the Earth is by reducing our carbon footprint and promoting ways to do achieve that goal. This can be done through tax credits and grant programs as well as through educating others.
31	D	Heidi Buchanan Schmidt	I believe that incentives and innovative market-based solutions are a key part of our approach to addressing the unique challenges facing Maryland due to the changing climate.

3. K-12 EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

The State of Maryland should continue to expand existing funding to provide scholarships for low-income students who wish to attend the K-12 nonpublic school best suited for their educational needs.

DISTRICT 31 SENATE CANDIDATES

31	R	Nicholaus Kipke	I continue to be one of the strongest advocates for this state funded scholarship funding known as the BOOST program. This program supports children in perpetually failing schools to get a lifeline to attend a participating school with much higher educational outcomes, including many Catholic Schools.
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DISTRICT 31 DELEGATE CANDIDATES

31	D	Joan Barone Cole	Similar to my response to Assistance to the Poor, low-income students deserve our support and assistance when we can provide it. If a K-12 nonpublic school is best suited for their educational needs, scholarships should be available to assist them.
31	D	Heidi Buchanan Schmidt	Public school funding should go to public schools -- any opportunity to provide scholarships to low-income students from public monies takes away from our public school funding. However, this is a separate consideration from IDEA Act compliance in situations where a public school is unable to meet a student's unique educational needs. As a parent of a neurodiverse student, I know that public school is not suited to every child, and I support every effort to ensure every learner receives a quality education.

4. PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE/MEDICAL AID IN DYING

In 1999, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation making it a felony for an individual to assist in another individual's suicide. Maryland should uphold the law in its current form and reject legislation to legalize the practice of physician-assisted suicide/medical aid in dying.

DISTRICT 31 SENATE CANDIDATES

31	R	Nicholaus Kipke	I have consistently been one of the strongest opponents to legalizing physician assisted suicide.
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DISTRICT 31 DELEGATE CANDIDATES

No responses.

5. WHY SHOULD MARYLAND CATHOLICS VOTE FOR YOU?

DISTRICT 31 SENATE CANDIDATES

31	R	Nicholaus Kipke	Throughout the 20 years in the House of Delegates and if elected to the State Senate I will continue to be a strong ally with the Archdiocese of Baltimore and an allied voice for Catholic voters. As a lifelong practicing Catholic I will continue to lean on Catholic teaching to guide my participation in the Maryland General Assembly.
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DISTRICT 31 DELEGATE CANDIDATES

31	D	Joan Barone Cole	I have been a practicing Catholic throughout my life and I attended Catholic school from 2nd-12th grade. I believe in God and in the teachings of the Catholic Church, and I try to follow the Golden Rule at all times to treat others as I would like to be treated. I am committed to providing assistance to the poor whenever possible, to providing the best education possible to K-12 students, and to taking care of this beautiful planet that God blessed us with.
31	D	Heidi Buchanan Schmidt	Maryland Catholics should vote for me because I lead with values, I lead with integrity, and I lead with faith. I believe the government should be a force for good for all, and work to improve the lives of our all Marylanders. Jesus's commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself" is something I think of often as I speak with neighbors from all backgrounds, all faiths, and across the political spectrum.
31	R	LaToya Marie Caldwell-Nkongolo	As a Christian wife, mother, and social worker, I share the core values many Catholics hold dear; faith, family, service, and the dignity of every human life. I believe in protecting the most vulnerable, strengthening families, and empowering parents in their children's education. I will continue to advocate for policies that uphold religious freedom, promote strong communities, and ensure responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Maryland Catholics can trust that I will lead with integrity and stand firm in the values that guide our daily lives.