



In a healthy democracy, respect is shown for the religious freedom and beliefs of every person. However, in our country today, religion is often used to divide and—more disturbingly—as a means to take away the rights of other people. In our pluralistic democracy, it is critical that those running for public office model how best to integrate their faith with their responsibility to all people, if elected.

The **Faith & Democracy Caucus Project** of the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa Action Fund explores the important issues around religious freedom and how the faith and beliefs of candidates would inform their policy decisions. The answers below were provided and approved by the candidate listed and the content was not edited in any manner. We encourage voters to consider the responses of all the candidates and follow up with each candidate to foster positive conversation on these critical issues.

.....**SENATOR CORY BOOKER**.....



1. Should candidates share their personal religious beliefs when running for public office?

No candidate should have to share their religious beliefs. I choose to talk openly about my faith because it is so core to who I am, and it guides my views on service and public policy. Growing up, I was taught that faith demands humility before God — that you look at your fellow human regardless of their faith, regardless of their background, with a conviction of love.

2. How will your faith or values influence your views on public policy?

Growing up, I was taught that faith demands humility before God — that you look at your fellow human regardless of their faith, regardless of their background, with a conviction of love. I am motivated by the life of Jesus. He lived a life committed to dealing with issues of the poor and the sick. Those who are so often disregarded, disrespected, and often oppressed. He lived a life of radical love, setting a standard that I strive to meet every single day, and one that is central to my work.

3. What are the proper boundaries between religion and government?

The First Amendment guarantees the separation of church and state. All Americans have the right to worship, or not, as they choose.



4. How will you protect the rights of people, especially the rights of those in the minority?

The honest telling of our nation's history is that the rights supposedly guaranteed to all Americans haven't been afforded to everyone. Our Constitution originally counted African-Americans as three-fifths of a person and referred to Native Americans as savages—women were not counted at all. Even today, we face structural barriers that systematically discount the votes of Black and Brown Americans.

We will never address the barriers that keep certain Americans from realizing their power unless we have a democracy where everyone has a voice. As President I will work with Congress to pass a new Voting Rights Act— one that restores Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, ends partisan gerrymandering and voter roll purging and makes it easier for people to vote. We need to set up automatic voter registration, allow more people to vote early and by mail, make ballots available in different languages, make election day a federal holiday and put an end to felon disenfranchisement.

5. How will you balance the principles of your faith or beliefs with your obligation to defend the Constitution, particularly if the two come into conflict?

Most Americans, whether they are religious or not, share a common moral framework based on justice and love. I don't need to talk about religion to talk about those ideals that all Americans hold dear.

6. How would you seek to balance the conflicting religious and civil rights of citizens?

I believe in religious freedom, but I do not believe that someone should have a right to discriminate against people and to use the powers of the law to deny people equal opportunity and equality under the law.

7. How would you reduce the influence of politics from our federal courts and make them less partisan?

We have seen first-hand the sweeping impact of the Supreme Court's shift to the right. In the last two and a half years alone, Supreme Court decisions have restricted access to reproductive health services, attacked public labor unions, and enriched corporations at the expense of workers. The next president will have the opportunity to restore our courts system as a bulwark against corporate and far-right interests by appointing justices who stand for the rights of all Americans. In selecting judicial nominees, I will prioritize individuals who not only reflect judicial independence and legal excellence, but also our nation's remarkable diversity— consisting of individuals who have seen first-hand the injustice in our country that they seek to address.

8. Should public funds be used for private educational choices at the K-12 level? If so, name the specific ways.

The evidence has become clear that vouchers do not help—and in fact, hurt—the cause of educational equity. I am the product of great New Jersey public schools, and I want every kid to have the same opportunity I did to get an outstanding public education. But that's not going to

happen if we don't make the investments we need to make in public education, including increasing pay for teachers, fully funding special education, and making the necessary investments in our kids so that they're equipped with the tools they need to succeed in the 21st century economy. We must do everything we can, including pursuing smart reforms, to ensure that every kid, no matter their zip code, has access to an outstanding public school education.

9. How would you protect a woman's right to reproductive health care, including abortion and contraceptive choices?

Attacks on women's rights must be understood as an attack on all of our rights. I will only nominate judges who are committed to upholding reproductive rights, work to pass legislation to codify the protections guaranteed by Roe v. Wade, and repeal the Hyde Amendment.

But I won't wait for Congress to act. Starting on Day One of my presidency, I will create a White House Office of Reproductive Freedom, charged with coordinating and affirmatively advancing abortion rights and access to reproductive health care across my Administration—addressing all barriers to full reproductive autonomy, such as access to health care, including maternal and infant health, quality, affordable child care, and comprehensive paid family leave. I will end the domestic gag rule that blocks health care providers from discussing abortion care with their patients, and guarantee access to employer-covered contraceptive care.

10. What priority actions would you take in addressing the immigration crisis at the southern border?

Our immigration system should reflect our values. Separating children from their families, abusive and indefinite detention of immigrants, and shutting the door to desperate refugees does not reflect who we are as Americans. As president, I will fight for the passage of legislation in Congress that reforms our immigration system and provides earned citizenship for the millions of undocumented immigrants living and working with us as our colleagues, neighbors, and friends.

But I understand the urgency of this issue—we cannot wait for Congress to act. Beginning on Day One of my presidency, I will use my executive authority to reform our immigration system by ending family separation, virtually eliminating immigration detention and the use of for-profit detention facilities, and creating a presumption of liberty with a fair and humane bond process. I will also address the root cause of the migration crisis by using the full power of our diplomatic tools.

11. How would you promote civility and civil dialogue in the public debate of issues that are dividing our nation?

I have built my career as a public servant and staked my campaign on the revival of civic grace—of radical love. Right now, people fear that the lines that divide us are stronger than the ties that bind us. I am running for president to change that. I believe that if we work together and channel our common pain into a common purpose, we can build a country where no one is forgotten or left behind. Where there are good paying jobs in every single neighborhood, and where parents can put food on the table and know that the future for their children is filled with

opportunity.

I am going to lead by example every day. I will be a president that stands up for the ideals of love because I believe that when we join together and work together, we will rise together.

The Interfaith Alliance of Iowa & Action Fund is grateful for the opportunity to provide the candidate responses to our Faith & Democracy questionnaire. This effort is solely meant as a tool to educate voters on the candidates' positions on these important issues. In no way is the publication of any candidate response to be seen as an endorsement of their candidacy for public office.

