



*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.

.....**MAYOR PETE BUTTIGIEG**.....



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

For many candidates, their personal religious beliefs inspire and motivate their values, principles, and policy priorities. I think it's appropriate for these candidates to be transparent about their faith.

It shouldn't matter whether a candidate finds inspiration in a church, synagogue, mosque, temple, ashram, in nature, or at home. Political candidates need to have moral integrity and ethical foundations to make wise, political decisions based on compassion and the common good. These characteristics can be informed by many sources, but if a candidate's religious beliefs inform those decisions, I think voters want to know that.

There are more ways for people of faith to talk about politics than through one religious point of view. That is why it heartens me to see that in this election cycle, many Democratic presidential candidates are sharing how their faith traditions inform their values and political priorities.

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

My Christian faith helps inform my values and priorities when it comes to protecting the vulnerable — the sick, the stranger, and the poor. It's also why I am skeptical of the wealthy, the



powerful, and the sanctimonious. If you find inspiration in the Gospel, we should be able to agree that it preaches inclusion, decency, humility, and care for the least among us -- no matter your political leanings. I attend to the Sermon on the Mount and, of course, the Golden Rule.

My signature policy proposals reflect this. My Douglass Plan is a comprehensive and intentional dismantling of racist structures and systems combined with an affirmative investment in the freedom and self-determination of Black Americans. Similarly, my National Service Plan opens pathways for young people to engage their communities and those around the world. They will work on issues including climate disruption; mental health, addiction and substance use; and caregiving and intergenerational mentorship. Ultimately, the aim of my proposals is to make life safer and more decent for all.

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

I believe a healthy democracy must have a separation of church and state; it's the best way to ensure that we respect every person's freedoms and beliefs. History tells us that when religion and government become intertwined — when religion is imposed by the apparatus of government — it harms people and institutions.

I seek to honor the principle of speaking for those of any religion or no religion, while also showing how values from my faith tradition, and the faith traditions of other Americans, can point us in a progressive direction. Rather than using religion as a cudgel, it unites us around shared higher values.

Government should fulfill the founders' intent: freedom of religion and freedom from religion. Government action and policies ensure that people can worship freely, which is critical as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism grow and many marginalized religious communities are targets of violence. Government should also ensure freedom from religion and take care never to favor one tradition. Good leaders can do both to promote peace and pluralism.

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

As president, I will use all executive tools to protect individual rights, including the rights of religious minorities, women, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ people. The Trump administration has gutted the civil rights divisions of departments like Education, Labor, Housing, and Justice and rolled back civil rights regulations. I will rebuild and strengthen these divisions. I will instruct my Attorney General to ensure these divisions work with the U.S. Attorneys nationwide to prosecute violations. I will protect the right for all to practice their religion by bolstering resources around the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) enforcement.

I am committed to passing the Equal Rights Amendment, the Equality Act, the Paycheck Fairness Act, and other civil, political, and voting rights laws. I will appoint judges from diverse backgrounds to the judiciary, including the Supreme Court. These judges will have shown a

career-long commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**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?**

As president, I will take an oath to uphold the Constitution and our laws, including our civil rights laws. These must be defended to ensure the rights of people are protected, including those who have historically faced discrimination in employment, housing, credit, education, voting, and public accommodations.

Many of the principles of my faith reinforce Constitutional values. For example, moral redemption, as I interpret it, means the attainment of values for a struggle against the forces, institutions, and people that threaten the least among us. Similarly, politics at its best is the use of power, both individual and collective, to do good in people's lives. Our constitutional structure ensures that no one person, group, or institution gets too much power. It prevents them from working for their self-interest and instead orients them to serve the people.

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

This issue is about fairness. Laws and policies that use religion as a license to harm others in the name of religion endanger not just our freedoms and individual rights but also religion itself. As president, I will ensure that religious beliefs are not used to discriminate or to justify religious exemptions that infringe the rights of other people. This is especially important for LGBTQ people, women, religious minorities, non-believers, and others.

As a person of faith, I disagree with those who wield their religious beliefs as a sword to deny healthcare, refuse to provide goods and services, and violate anti-discrimination laws. Understood this way, I don't believe there is a conflict between religious liberty and civil rights. Instead, the tension arises when anyone would use religion as a reason or excuse to harm others.

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

We need to reform the federal judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, to strengthen its independence and restore the public's trust.

For the Supreme Court, one promising idea is to restructure the Court so that ten members are confirmed in the normal political fashion, with the other five promoted from the lower courts by unanimous agreement of the other ten. As president, I will create a bipartisan reform commission to recommend structural improvements to protect the federal judiciary from further politicization, including reforms to the selection process.

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

I do not support public funds being used for private educational choices because they tend to

come at the expense of quality public education. They take dollars out of our public schools, which is particularly concerning at a time when we should be providing more resources to our public schools, especially those that serve primarily low-income students and students of color.

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

A woman should have the freedom to make medical decisions on her own or with the counsel of her doctor, family, and faith leaders — those whom she chooses and trusts. As president, my budget will not restrict abortion coverage, and I will ensure comprehensive coverage is available for all women, with private insurance or Medicaid, that includes preventive health, contraception, maternity care, and access to legal and safe abortion. These measures lead to greater health and fewer occasions for abortion.

I will work with Congress to pass legislation preventing states from restricting access to abortion and prioritize these goals when considering judicial appointments. Regarding contraception access, I will increase funding for Title X family planning and protect Medicaid expansion and the ACA's preventive reproductive care for women with no cost sharing. In addition, I'll reverse the "gag and conscience" rules that interfere with an individual's right to the evidence-based care that best meets her needs.

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

There is a humanitarian crisis at the border, and the Trump administration's steps are only making the situation worse. Rather than address the conditions that push families out of their home countries, this administration cuts funding and disengages from the region. Rather than provide needed resources to provide timely asylum decisions, this administration wants to build a wall and make it harder to apply for asylum. This is cruel and counterproductive.

We need to reinforce our values as a nation of immigrants by allocating resources to care for these vulnerable children and families, provide capacity for our asylum system to process claims, and address the causes that are leading families to flee their homes in the first place. We also must reduce the number of immigrants at the border we are holding in detention, and reinstate and expand case management programs. Above all, we must do all we can to protect those who come to our border seeking refuge and keep families together.

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

I think it starts with a certain amount of humility, empathy, and a recognition that how you voted doesn't mean we should stop the conversation because you didn't vote the same way I did. We shouldn't think of ourselves as better human beings than someone else because of how we voted.

This recognition doesn't mean we shouldn't call out injustice when we see it. We must call out, for example, racism, sexism, and other forms of bigotry when we see it.

Instead, civil dialogue requires us first to listen and understand, appreciate every person's humanity and right to an opinion, build trust in relationships, and find common purpose through the dialogue. Religion, at its best, unifies us and connects us to each other. I observe a religion that calls us to love our neighbor, to love the stranger, to serve those scorned by society. We must talk to each other in this spirit of good faith. As president, I will promote civility by seeking to modeling good faith civil dialogue in everything I do.



*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.*

