



*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.

.....**REPRESENTATIVE TULSI GABBARD**.....



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

It's up to each individual candidate. However, I would hope that if a candidate brings up their personal spiritual values, beliefs, or affiliations, that it would be done so with the purpose of bringing people closer together, not dividing us, or indirectly "otherizing" other candidates because those candidates may not be of the majority religious faith or may hold no faith. In other words, a candidate's religion or the religion of an opposing candidate should never be weaponized.

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

Central to my spiritual life is the recognition and appreciation that we're all God's children—regardless of our race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, education, and so on. It is this deep respect and love for all of God's children that motivates me to work for the well-being of others ahead of my own interests, and to stand up against hatred, divisiveness, bigotry and greed. In other words, it's my love for God and all of His children that is the core motivating principle and foundation of my existence. I realized early on in my life that I was happiest when I was using my life working for the well-being of others. Nothing is more pleasing to God than that. I've tried to live my life accordingly.



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

It is the duty of government to defend each individual's right to worship according to their conscience or not worship at all. Government should not, however, promote one particular religion over others. While the Constitution gives us the freedom to practice whatever religion we choose, it also enforces the separation of church and state. I will always defend that separation.

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

As a person who is both a racial and religious minority, I have directly experienced the unique challenges we face. For instance, throughout every one of my campaigns, my opponents have tried to undermine my candidacy by saying that my faith is unconstitutional or likening it to devil worship.

Throughout my career in Congress, I have defended the rights of working people, indigenous communities, people of color, and disadvantaged communities. I have fought to improve housing and education, ensure voting rights, and protect the right of all people to clean water. I have worked to end the cash bail system, legalize marijuana, hold big pharma accountable and reform our sentencing policies. I have fought discrimination against women and the LGBTQ+ community in our schools, workforce, and in housing. And I have worked to end the pervasive influence of money in our politics. These are all commitments that I will carry through as president, putting the needs of the people before all else.

### **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?**

I do not see any contradiction between my spiritual path and the Constitution. I do not perceive there being any conflict. As a member of Congress and a soldier, I have taken an oath to protect and defend the Constitution in all circumstances. And as president, I will continue to do so. As president, my first and foremost obligation will always be to defend the Constitution.

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

The freedom of religion is one of our most important civil rights. None of our rights should be used to undermine or interfere with the rights of others. While every American has the right to practice the religion of their choice, it should never harm or infringe upon the rights of others.

This is why in Congress I was an early supporter of marriage equality, ensuring that LGBTQ+ couples are granted the same rights and privileges as heterosexual couples under the law.

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

I will work to end the politicization of our judiciary by nominating judges based on their commitment to upholding and defending the Constitution. We need to eliminate the

partisanship of our courts and respect them as a separate entity holding checks and balances upon our lawmaking bodies and executive branch. We should not let politics or partisanship infiltrate our federal courts.

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

No.

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

In Congress, I have long been an advocate for a woman's right to choose and have a 100% pro-choice record in Congress. As President, I will continue to unequivocally uphold these rights.

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

Our immigration policy must balance border security, an asylum process that reflects our values as a nation of immigrants, and a path to legal status for DREAMers and others who are forced to live in the shadows. We need to end our failed longstanding policy of military and economic intervention in Central and South America which has contributed to decades of civil war and economic instability and which is the root cause of mass immigration, as well as ensuring that our asylum process is humane and fair.

As president, I will:

- Prioritize border security using the methods determined to be most efficient, effective and humane
- End family separation at the border, for-profit immigration detention centers and deportation of veterans
- Accelerate immigration and asylum claims processing to reduce backlogs, quickly adjudicate new refugee claims and make detention a measure of last resort.
- Establish more asylum processing systems in refugees' countries of origin at embassies and consulates.

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

What our country needs now more than ever is the spirit of aloha – respect and love for one another and love for our country. This is the spirit I will bring to the White House, ensuring that the mission of government is to work together, despite our racial, cultural, religious and political differences, for the wellbeing of the American people.

Aloha means that I come to you with an open heart, with love, respect and care — regardless of the color of your skin, where you come from, how you worship God, who you love, or what political party you belong to.

Dr. Martin Luther King saw the power of aloha when he first visited my home state in 1959. He

said: "...you can never know what it means to those of us caught for the moment in the tragic and often dark midnight of man's inhumanity to man, to come to a place where we see the glowing daybreak of freedom and dignity and racial justice."

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*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.*

