



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 BERNIE SANDERS**.....



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

This should be a decision left to the candidate.

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

Bernie is very proud of being Jewish. It is an essential part of who he is as a human being. His father's family was wiped out by Hitler in the Holocaust, and the treatment of Jews is fundamental to how Bernie thinks about the world in terms of ensuring that people from every background are treated with dignity, equality and respect.

Faith is a guiding principle in Bernie's life. Everybody practices religion in a different way. For Bernie, he would not be running for president of the United States if he did not have a strong religious and spiritual foundation.

He believes that, as a human being, the pain that one person feels, if we have children who are hungry in America, if we have elderly people who can't afford their prescription drugs, you know what, that impacts you, that impacts him. That's his very strong spiritual feeling, and that influences his approach to public policy.



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

Religious freedom in this country is part of our Constitution and one of the founding principles of the nation. Religious diversity is what America's beauty is about, but we also have the separation of religion and state and that is something we must protect. Bernie knows how dangerous it is historically for governments to enforce religion. That is not what our founding fathers wanted and they were right on this issue.

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

It is Bernie's very strong belief that the United States must reject Trump's path of hatred and divisiveness -- and instead find the moral conviction to choose a different path, a higher path, a path of compassion, justice and love.

We will transform this country into a nation that affirms the value of its people of color, we must address the five central types of violence waged against black, brown and indigenous Americans: physical, political, legal, economic and environmental.

Whether it is a broken criminal justice system, or massive disparities in the availability of financial services, or health disparities, or environmental disparities, or educational disparities, our job is to—and we will—create a nation in which all people are treated equally.

We will guarantee everyone in our country the right to quality health care, to a quality education, to a good job that pays a living wage, to affordable housing, to a secure retirement, and the right to live in a clean environment.

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?

Bernie has a deep and abiding faith in the American people to peacefully and democratically enact the transformative change that will create shared prosperity, social equality and true freedom for all.

This is a campaign not just to win the Democratic primary, and not just to defeat Donald Trump, although we must and we will. This is a campaign to bring fundamental political change to America. So when we are in the White House, we will have the movement and the people and the mandate to pass the implement the major reforms we need.

The movement we are building understands that religious freedom in this country is part of our Constitution, but that also have the separation of religion and state and that is something we must protect. Bernie knows how dangerous it is historically for governments to get deeply involved in religion.

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

As president, Bernie will strongly oppose any efforts that purport to “protect” religious liberty at the expense of others’ rights, especially loopholes that could be used to deny equal treatment to LGBTQ+ people based on so-called “religious freedom” claims.

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

The conservative justices on the Supreme Court have a far right agenda that is completely out of touch with what the American people want. Constitutionally we have the power to rotate judges to other courts. And that brings new blood into the Supreme Court and a new majority.

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?

Bernie believes access to abortion is a fundamental constitutional right, period. When we are in the White House, Bernie will fight back against the Republican assault on abortion rights across the country. When we are in the White House, we will:

- Pass Medicare for All, which would overturn the Hyde Amendment and provide comprehensive reproductive health care for all women, regardless of income or immigration status.
- Fully fund Planned Parenthood, Title X, and other initiatives that protect health, access to contraception, and the availability of a safe and legal abortion.
- Fight the vicious attempts to criminalize abortion and fight the attack on women’s rights at the federal, state, and local level.
- If Roe v. Wade were overturned, Bernie would push for federal legislation to protect a woman’s right to choose.

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

When Bernie is president, his first executive actions will be to reverse every single thing President Trump has done to demonize and harm immigrants. He will fundamentally restructure ICE and ensure all immigration agencies are subject to appropriate oversight. He will end the detention of children, families, and non-violent immigrants and ensure any shelters necessary provide access to medical and humanitarian services. He will authorize alternatives to detention that are community-based, and ensure legal counsel and support for immigrants before and at their hearings.

He will also fight for a pathway to citizenship to bring 11 million immigrants out of the shadows and strengthen our country, our economy, and our society and expand and implement DACA and DAPA.

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

Bernie has a deep and abiding faith in the American people to peacefully and democratically enact the transformative change that will create shared prosperity, social equality and true freedom for all.

Today, we have a demagogue in the White House who, for cheap political gain, is attempting to deflect the attention of the American people away from the real crises that we face and, instead, is doing what demagogues always do - and that is divide people up and legislate hatred. This is a president who supports brutal family separations, border walls, Muslim bans, anti-LGBTQ+ policies, deportations and voter suppression.

It is Bernie's very strong belief that the United States must reject that path of hatred and divisiveness -- and instead find the moral conviction to choose a different path, a higher path, a path of compassion, justice and love.

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.

