



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.

.....**ADMIRAL (RT.) JOE SESTAK**.....



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

I believe it is a deeply personal decision whether or not to share personal religious beliefs when running for public office, or doing anything else in public life. For many people, religiosity is a private matter, and I respect that.

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

My Catholic faith influences me in many ways, but primarily in the admonition to "love thy neighbor as thyself." My belief in justice is rooted in my faith.

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

I believe in the proverbial wall between church and state. I don't believe any religion has a right to impose its morals on the rest of the US population.

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

I propose a wide range of policies to deal with social and racial justice, available in full here: <https://www.joesestak.com/issues/social-and-racial-justice/>.



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 be bound by oath and duty to "preserve, protect, and defend" the Constitution.

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

Civil rights are critical to a free society. I also believe in religious liberty. While I will aim to strike a balance when the two come into conflict, I will not allow religious liberty to be used an excuse for discrimination in publicly regulated spheres.

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

I am open to term limits for federal judges, which I would hope would make the courts less partisan. Lifetime appointments lead to very high-stakes nomination hearings and a tendency toward people with more extreme views. I would hope term limits would favor more moderation.

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?

I will urge Congress to finally pass an act enshrining a legal right to abortion in federal law, so that this fundamental right cannot be taken away by judicial activism. I will also maintain funding for organizations like Planned Parenthood. My full platform on women's rights can be found here: <https://www.joesestak.com/issues/womens-rights/>

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

I would immediately devote whatever resources are necessary to reuniting children with their parents or guardians. I would also increase funding for detention centers and immigration courts so that all migrants and asylum-seekers are treated humanely and that their cases are adjudicated in a fair and timely manner. I would work quickly to negotiate a comprehensive immigration reform package, including a path to citizenship, and increased numbers of guest workers whose labor is critical for many US industries. And I will work with the international community — including the Organization of American States and the United Nations — to explore innovative solutions to address the root causes of migration, including climate change, violence, corruption, and poverty.

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

As a person with decades of experience in the military, I believe I am uniquely well suited to

bring our country together. I learned in the military that people with widely diverging beliefs and ideologies can still work together for the common good. I believe the way I have been running my campaign is a good indicator of how I will promote civility and civil dialogue as President: I will never make personal, ad hominem attacks on a political opponent. I will not be dismissive of any ideas expressed in good faith. And, most of all, I will always listen. We may have to disagree sometimes, but the least we can do is disagree well.



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.

