



*Representing the Diocese of
Fargo and the Diocese of
Bismarck*

103 South Third Street
Suite 10
Bismarck ND 58501
701-223-2519
ndcatholic.org
ndcatholic@ndcatholic.org

Statement on the North Dakota Catholic Conference's Opposition to Measure 1 by Christopher Dodson, Executive Director and General Counsel

Today, on behalf of the Catholic dioceses of North Dakota, the North Dakota Catholic Conference is adding its name to the growing list of community and civil liberty organizations opposing Measure 1 on the November ballot.

Churches and charities do not support or oppose political candidates. Nor do they make contributions to public officials. They do, however, speak out public issues and partner with state agencies to serve the public. Though well-intentioned, Measure 1 would force churches and charities to turn over the privacy of every contributor as the "price" to pay for civil engagement.

The Catholic Church believes that ethics and integrity should be the hallmark of the political process. Measure 1, however, is not about whether someone supports more integrity and ethics in government. It is about the actual language of the measure. The actual language is poorly written and unnecessarily threatens the work of churches, charities, and social service agencies.

Here are a few examples of the sweeping consequences of Measure 1:

- Churches would have to reveal the name of every member who contributed to the church, even if only a small fraction of the church's total budget was used to "influence government action" or to speak out on a ballot measure.
- Charities also would have to publicize the name of every contributor if the charity voiced an opinion about a public policy matter. Anonymous donations would no longer be allowed.
- Social service agencies would have to disclose the name of every contributor as the "admission fee" for partnering with state agencies to provide important social services like health care, foster care, guardianship, and sheltering victims of domestic violence.
- The measure creates several tools that people could use to harass churches, charities, and their members. One of these tools is a new right to sue that bypasses state laws.
- It could prevent representatives from charities and social service organizations from serving on state boards and commissions.
- The measure would prevent churches and charities from asking former public officials for help on a government issue, even if it is for a short time and on a voluntary basis.

Contrary to claims made by the measure's supporters, there is no guaranty that the legislature will or even can fix these problems. In fact, the measure appears to prohibit the legislature from exempting churches and charities from the law.

Everyone wants greater integrity in government. Measure 1, however, is not the answer.