



Ohio Ballot Issue 1 November 2018

There is one statewide issue on the November 6, 2018 ballot. **Issue 1** will amend Ohio's Constitution to reduce penalties

for crimes of obtaining, possessing, and using illegal drugs, and put savings obtained from these measures into rehabilitation and crime victim programs.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio has not taken a position on this issue. We offer these reflections as an aid to one's discernment process.

Prudential Discernment

This issue requires prudential discernment. *"...Catholics may choose different ways to respond to compelling social problems, but we cannot differ on our moral obligation to help build a more just and peaceful world through morally acceptable means, so that the weak and vulnerable are protected and human rights and dignity are defended."*

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship #20, USCCB, 2015

State Issue 1

To Reduce Penalties for Crimes of Obtaining, Possessing, and Using Illegal Drugs

This Constitutional Amendment will:

- Require sentence reductions of incarcerated individuals, except individuals incarcerated for murder, rape, or child molestation, by up to 25% if the individual participates in rehabilitative, work, or educational programming.
- Mandate that criminal offenses of obtaining, possessing, or using any drug such as fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, LSD, and other controlled substances cannot be classified as a felony, but only a misdemeanor.
- Prohibit jail time as a sentence for obtaining, possessing, or using such drugs until an individual's third offense within 24 months.
- Allow an individual convicted of obtaining, possessing, or using any such drug prior to the effective date of the amendment to ask a court to reduce the conviction to a misdemeanor, regardless of whether the individual has completed the sentence.

- Require any available funding, based on projected savings, to be applied to state-administered rehabilitation programs and crime victim funds.
- Require a graduated series of responses, such as community service, drug treatment, or jail time, for minor, non-criminal probation violations.

Catholic Conference of Ohio Reflections

We affirm the good intentions behind Issue 1. Our dedicated prison ministers, social services workers and the formerly incarcerated cry out for new approaches and additional funds to combat the drug crisis. Too many of our current approaches are not fully restoring and rehabilitating people. It is indeed critical to be suggesting new alternatives.

Catholic social teaching supports many of the goals of Issue 1 such as: increased programming for rehabilitation, substance abuse treatment, community reentry, and crime victim support. The question before us involves a prudential determination as to whether Issue 1 is appropriately conceived to achieve these and its other stated goals. Are the provisions the right prescription for the problem?

We encourage your careful and prayerful discernment of the pros and cons of this issue. Our Conference website, listed below, offers links to such informational resources.

Regardless of the outcome of this issue, we encourage continued advocacy in addressing these important aspects of restorative justice.

Reflection Questions

1. Will passage of Issue 1 promote the value and dignity of the human person and advance the common good of persons in the state, especially the poor and vulnerable?
2. Are the provisions in Issue 1 well-conceived, implementable, and enforceable?
3. Will passage of Issue 1 improve public safety while providing additional funds for needed treatment services?
4. Will the provisions in Issue 1 result in changes that will help, or hinder, in the fight to address drug abuse?
5. Does Issue 1 belong in Ohio's Constitution, or is this an issue better addressed by the Ohio Legislature? What is the likelihood that the legislature will enact similar legislation?

**Ballot and Voting Information is available at www.sos.state.oh.us/legislation-and-ballot-issues/ballot-board/
Catholic Conference of Ohio: www.ohiocathconf.org**