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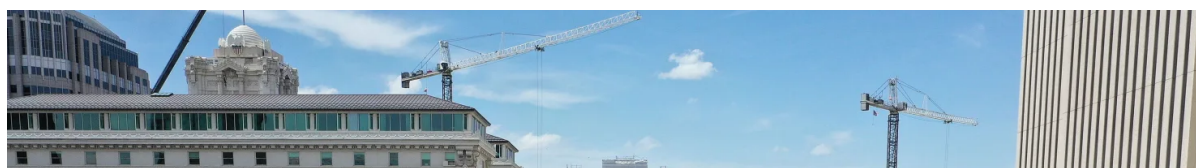
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST WORLD & NATION FAITH

# Latter-day Saints update and expand policy on political neutrality and participation

“The church is neutral in matters of politics within or between the world’s many nations, lands and peoples. However ... it reserves the right to address issues it believes have significant moral consequences... ”

By Tad Walch | Jun 1, 2023, 11:36am MDT

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By updating its policy statement on politics on Thursday, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints underscored both its religious mission and how it interacts with governments and political parties.

The church has shared statements of political neutrality for decades, saying that it is neutral in matters of party politics around the world while reserving the right to share its opinion on moral issues or related legislation.

The updated and expanded statement released by the church on Thursday includes a new opening paragraph.

The work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints includes sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, strengthening individuals and families, and caring for those in need. The church does not seek to elect government officials, support or oppose political parties, or, generally, take sides in global conflicts. The church is neutral in matters of politics within or between the world's many nations, lands and peoples. However, as an institution, it reserves the right to address issues it believes have significant moral consequences or that directly affect the mission, teachings or operations of the church.

The updated statement also has a new conclusion.

Christ of Latter-day Saints will continue to seek prophetic wisdom and revelation on these matters.

The statement is published on one of the church's official websites as a topic page titled "Political Neutrality."

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The topic page continues to provide detailed lists of what the church does and does not do when it comes to politics.

### **The Church does not:**

- Endorse, promote or oppose political parties and their platforms or candidates for political office.
- Allow its church buildings, membership lists or other resources to be used for political purposes. (For more information regarding the appropriate use of church buildings and property, see the *General Handbook*, 35.5.2 and 35.5.8).
- Advise its members on how to vote.
- Direct government officials or party leaders in the duties of their office.
- Typically issue statements regarding disputes in or between nations, lands or peoples; rather, it teaches the gospel of Jesus Christ, with the knowledge that living these principles limits contention and hostilities.

### **The Church does:**

- Believe and teach that members should be subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law (Article of Faith 1:12).
- Recognize a universal right to the free exercise of conscience and believes all individuals and institutions should be able to express publicly their views on issues

- Encourage its members to play a role as responsible citizens in their communities, including becoming informed about issues, voting in elections, participating in governance processes and (as they desire) seeking for elected, appointed or voluntary office.
- Encourage its members to engage in the political process in an informed and civil manner, respecting that fellow members of the church come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences and may have differences of opinion in partisan political matters. The church also encourages its members to keep all communications (including on social media) respectful and aligned with Christlike behavior.
- Request that candidates for office not imply that their candidacies or platforms are endorsed by the church.
- Provide humanitarian assistance around the world, including areas of international conflict. While political strife may be a factor in causing the need for assistance, the church will generally not comment on the conflict itself. Rather, the church seeks to live the Savior’s two great commandments—to love God and our neighbor—by alleviating suffering wherever it is found, regardless of the race, nationality, tribe, political persuasion or religious affiliation of those involved.

The church also, according to its General Handbook, “provides humanitarian aid throughout the world. It does this both directly and through collaboration with other relief organizations. Aid is given without regard to race, religion or nationality.”

The rest of the church’s political neutrality page covers government relations and the political participation of church leaders:

## **Relationships with Government**

Government officials and political representatives who are Latter-day Saints make their own decisions. They are not expected or asked to agree with one another or even with a publicly stated church position. While the church may communicate its views to them, as it may to any other officials or representatives, it recognizes that these individuals must make their own choices according to their best judgment and considering the constituencies they were elected to represent.

## **Political Participation of Presiding Church Officers**


clarification of the church's position on political neutrality. The policy applies to all General authorities, general officers, mission presidents and temple presidents and limits their personal participation in all political party activities. The policy is not directed at church employees. The policy, as outlined in the letter, is provided below.

General authorities and general officers of the church and their spouses and other ecclesiastical leaders serving full-time should not personally participate in political campaigns, including promoting candidates, fundraising, speaking in behalf of or otherwise endorsing candidates, and making financial contributions.

Since they are not full-time officers of the church, Area Seventies, stake presidents and bishops are free to contribute, serve on campaign committees, and otherwise support candidates of their choice with the understanding they:

- Are acting solely as individual citizens in the democratic process and that they do not imply, or allow others to infer, that their actions or support in any way represent the church.
- Will not use church stationery, church-generated address lists or email systems or church buildings for political promotional purposes.
- Will not engage in fundraising or other types of campaigning focused on fellow church members under their ecclesiastical supervision.

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