



## THE ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY COALITION 2016 MASSACHUSETTS FAITH AND THE BALLOT GUIDE

### Discussion of the 2016 MA Ballot Questions

As organizations that represent, employ, and serve people who live in Massachusetts, we inevitably have opinions about the four questions on the ballot this November. Some of us have even taken public positions on the issues discussed in the following pages.

For such fallible, interested individuals in a broken political system to attempt perfect balance or completeness would be a fool's errand. And so with this guide we have attempted instead to be honest, specific, and to present the best in each side.

We hope that you will:

- Read about the 4 ballot questions in this guide;
- Be provoked into thoughtful and civil discussion on the way that faith informs your vote on these issues by the questions posed;
- Learn more—from advocates, new sources, and members of your faith community—listening always for the voices of those who might be left vulnerable by a vote each way.

## THE ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY COALITION

City Mission  
Episcopal City Mission  
The Massachusetts Council of Churches  
UU Mass Action



# BALLOT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you read about each of the questions on this year's ballot, we invite you to reflect on these questions or use them as a guide for discussion with others from your congregation.

- Can you think of a story from your faith tradition that speaks to one of the four ballot questions?
- Think of one of the ballot questions: Are the people on the different sides of this debate equally vulnerable?
- Recognizing the limitations of our political process, which of these ballot questions would advance your faith tradition's vision of justice?

## QUESTION 1: EXPANDED GAMING INITIATIVE

### WHAT WOULD A YES VOTE MEAN?

*A YES vote would grant the Massachusetts Gaming Commission the ability to issue an additional slots license, particularly for Suffolk Downs.*

### WHAT WOULD A NO VOTE MEAN?

*A NO vote would retain the current law that allows three resort casinos and one slots parlor.*

### WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM A YES VOTE?

- Casino developers
- Local municipalities, due to increased revenue
- Local citizens seeking employment

### WHO MIGHT BE LEFT VULNERABLE BY A YES VOTE?

- Citizens and families struggling with gambling addiction
- Local communities opposed to casinos in their town
- Property owners in surrounding communities

**SOURCES: [BALLOTPEDIA.ORG](http://BALLOTPEDIA.ORG)**

## QUESTION 2: AUTHORIZATION OF ADDITIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS/CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

### WHAT WOULD A YES VOTE MEAN?

*A YES vote supports a proposal to authorize up to 12 new charter schools or enrollment expansions in existing charter schools by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education per year.*

### WHAT WOULD A NO VOTE MEAN?

*A NO vote opposes a proposal to authorize up to 12 new charter schools or enrollment expansions in existing charter schools.*

### WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM A YES VOTE?

- Families that want school choice and believe that their local school does not meet their child's educational needs
- 37,000 children on waiting lists seeking charter school placement

## WHO MIGHT BE LEFT VULNERABLE BY A YES VOTE?

- Students in traditional public schools whose budgets are affected
- Local communities that are opposed to charter schools in their area
- Vulnerable student populations, such as English language learners and special needs students, who become a higher proportion of students in less-resourced traditional public schools

**SOURCES: BALLOTPEDIA.ORG & MASSTEACHER.ORG**

# QUESTION 3: CONTAINMENT OF FARM ANIMALS

## WHAT WOULD A YES VOTE MEAN?

*A YES vote would, by 2022, prohibit any confinement of pigs, calves, and hens that prevents them from lying down, standing up, fully extending their limbs, or turning around freely with exceptions for transport, slaughter, and other specific animal husbandry purposes. A YES vote would also prohibit businesses from selling uncooked eggs, pork, or veal if the business owner knows or should know that the animal was kept contrary to these requirements.*

## WHAT WOULD A NO VOTE MEAN?

*A NO vote would make no change in the law related to keeping farm animals.*

## WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM A YES VOTE?

- **Consumers would be safer:**
  - Cramped quarters and lack movement weaken animal immune systems and promote spread of disease
- **Farmers/farm workers would see more jobs and better working conditions:**
  - “Cage-free” farms often require additional skilled workers.
  - Better conditions for animals lessens emotional toll on workers and gives better opportunities to observe and promote animal health
- **Farm animals would have better living conditions**
- **Businesses using only “cage-free” products would see competitors required to do the same**
- **The environment would be better protected:**
  - Decreased density of farm animals minimizes concentrated animal waste that can pollute local land, air, and waterways

## WHO MIGHT BE LEFT VULNERABLE BY A YES VOTE?

- **Consumers would see higher prices for veal, pork, and eggs and fewer choices:**
  - Estimates say the price of eggs would increase anywhere from 12 cents to over 50 cents per dozen
- **Farmers would see increased costs:**
  - MA farmers would have to change infrastructure (both sides agree this would only affect one egg farmer in the state)
  - Lower density of animals and additional staffing requirements would raise production costs
- **Restaurants and grocery stores would see increased supply costs**

**SOURCES: CITIZENS FOR FARM ANIMALS & MASSACHUSETTS FARM BUREAU FEDERATION**

# QUESTION 4: LEGALIZATION, REGULATION, AND TAXATION OF MARIJUANA

## WHAT WOULD A YES VOTE MEAN?

*A YES vote would:*

- Legalize marijuana for recreational use for those 21 years and older and allow them to:
  - Possess, use, and transfer marijuana and products containing marijuana concentrate (including edible products)
  - Cultivate marijuana
- Provide for the regulation and taxation of the commercial sale of marijuana and marijuana products in limited amounts
- Impose a 3.75% excise tax on marijuana sales on top of 6.25% MA sales tax (10% tax) and allow cities and towns to add a local tax of up to 2% (12% tax total)
- Give cities and towns the right to regulate, limit, or prohibit the operation of marijuana establishments within their borders
- Maintain illegality of driving under the influence of marijuana and allow employers to maintain all current employment drug use policies
- Prohibit use of marijuana in public
- Require businesses to test marijuana products and adhere to strict packaging and labeling guidelines
- Create a Cannabis Control Commission to oversee a system of licensed retail stores, cultivation facilities, and manufacturing and testing facilities.

## WHAT WOULD A NO VOTE MEAN?

*A NO vote would make no change to current state laws relative to the sale, cultivation, or possession of marijuana*

## WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM A YES VOTE?

- Adults managing pain who want options that avoid the risk of opioid addiction
- Marijuana business owners
- Schools, veteran services, opioid treatment centers, law enforcement, and other state-funded services from potential increase in state revenue

## WHO MIGHT BE LEFT VULNERABLE BY A YES VOTE?

- Pharmaceutical companies from decreased revenue
- Those already charged, convicted, and/or sentenced for possession and/or distribution of marijuana
- Those who cannot afford the increased tax rates
- Those who currently sell marijuana

**SOURCES: MA VOTER TABLE, MA INFORMATION FOR VOTERS, AND YES ON 4 PALMCARD**